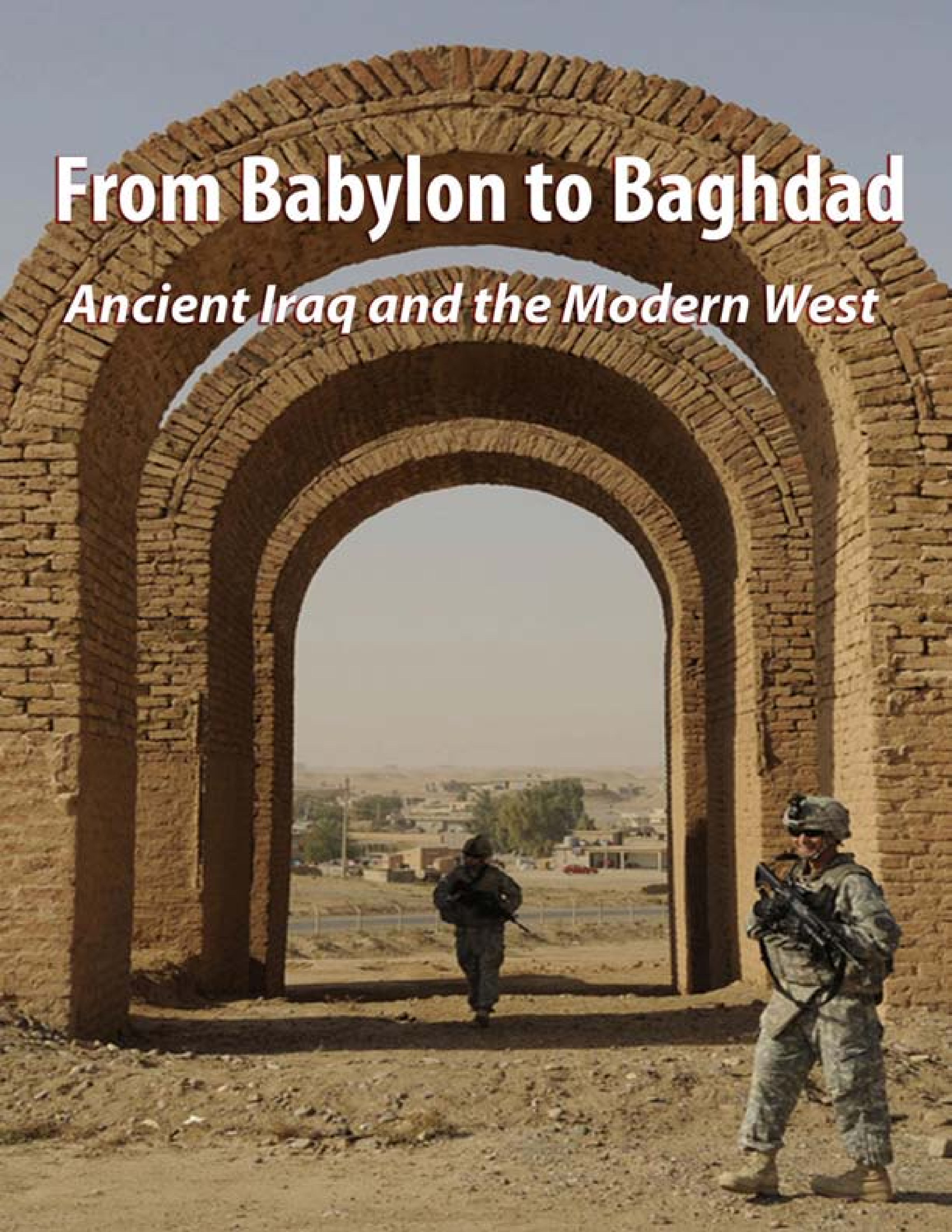
From Babylon to Baghdad

Ancient Iraq and the Modern West



From Babylon to Baghdad

Ancient Iraq and the Modern West

Staff for this book:

Sarah Yeomans - Editor

Robert Bronder - Designer

Susan Laden - Publisher

Sara Murphy - Web Master

Cover Photo courtesy of the United States Army

Biblical Archaeology Society
4710 41st Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016
www.biblicalarchaeology.org

About the Biblical Archaeology Society

The excitement of archaeology and the latest in Bible scholarship since 1974

The Biblical Archaeology Society (**BAS**) was founded in 1974 as a nonprofit, nondenominational, educational organization dedicated to the dissemination of information about archaeology in the Bible lands.

BAS educates the public about archaeology and the Bible through its bi-monthly magazine, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, an award-winning web site www.biblicalarchaeology.org, books and multimedia products (DVDs, CD-ROMs and videos), tours and seminars. Our readers rely on us to present the latest that scholarship has to offer in a fair and accessible manner. **BAS** serves as an important authority and as an invaluable source of reliable information.

Publishing Excellence

BAS's flagship publication is *Biblical Archaeology Review*. **BAR** is the only magazine that connects the academic study of archaeology to a broad general audience eager to understand the world of the Bible. Covering both the Old and New Testaments, **BAR** presents the latest discoveries and controversies in archaeology with breathtaking photography and informative maps and diagrams. **BAR**'s writers are the top scholars, the leading researchers, the world-renowned experts. **BAR** is the only nonsectarian forum for the discussion of Biblical archaeology.

BAS produced two other publications, *Bible Review* from 1985–2005, and *Archaeology Odyssey* from 1998–2006. The complete editorial contents of all three magazines are available on the **BAS** Online Archive. The Archive also contains the text of five highly-acclaimed books, *Ancient Israel*, *Aspects of Monotheism*, *Feminist Approaches to the Bible*, *The Rise of Ancient Israel* and *The Search for Jesus*. The online archive is available through various colleges, universities, churches and other institutions. It is also available to individual users through the **BAS** Library.

Widespread Acclaim

The society, its magazine, and its founder and editor Hershel Shanks have been the subject of widespread acclaim and media attention in publications as diverse as *Time*, *People*, *Civilization*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Jerusalem Post*. **BAS** has also been featured on television programs aired by *CNN*, *PBS* and the *Discovery Channel*. To learn more about the Biblical Archaeology Society and subscribe to its magazine, go to www.biblicalarchaeology.org.

Also from the Biblical Archaeology Society

The BAS Library

Articles found in this e-book are available fully illustrated in the BAS Library, along with more than 30 years of articles by the world's foremost scholars of Biblical archaeology and related fields. Whether for school, work or personal knowledge, this is the perfect site to explore the Bible, ancient Near Eastern, Mediterranean and Classical history, anthropology, religion and, of course, archaeology.

Find out more about The BAS Library

Honor and Shame: Core Values of the Biblical World

by Richard Rohrbaugh, Lewis and Clark College

Lecture in DVD or Audio Format



Rohrbaugh elucidates the concepts of honor and shame, which he sees as core values in Mediterranean culture and thus of the Biblical world. Rohrbaugh draws on his experiences of living in both the Mediterranean world and in the West. He concentrates on passages in the New Testament that are influenced by the culture of the region and highlights the important role of honor and shame in those verses.

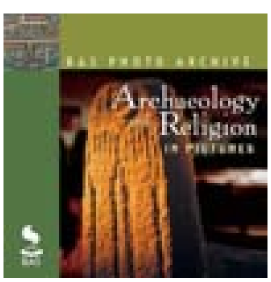
Richard Rohrbaugh is professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Among his publications are *Social Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (with Bruce Malina; Fortress, 1998), *Using Social Science in New Testament Interpretations* (Fortress, 1996) and *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Fortress, 1992).

More information on Honor and Shame DVD

More information on Honor and Shame Audio

Archaeology and Religion in Pictures CD-Rom

Archaeology and Religion in Pictures is an unprecedented collection of images devoted to archaeological sites and artifacts that express the human religious impulse over thousands of years. These slides vividly depict the human struggle to reach for—and understand—the divine.

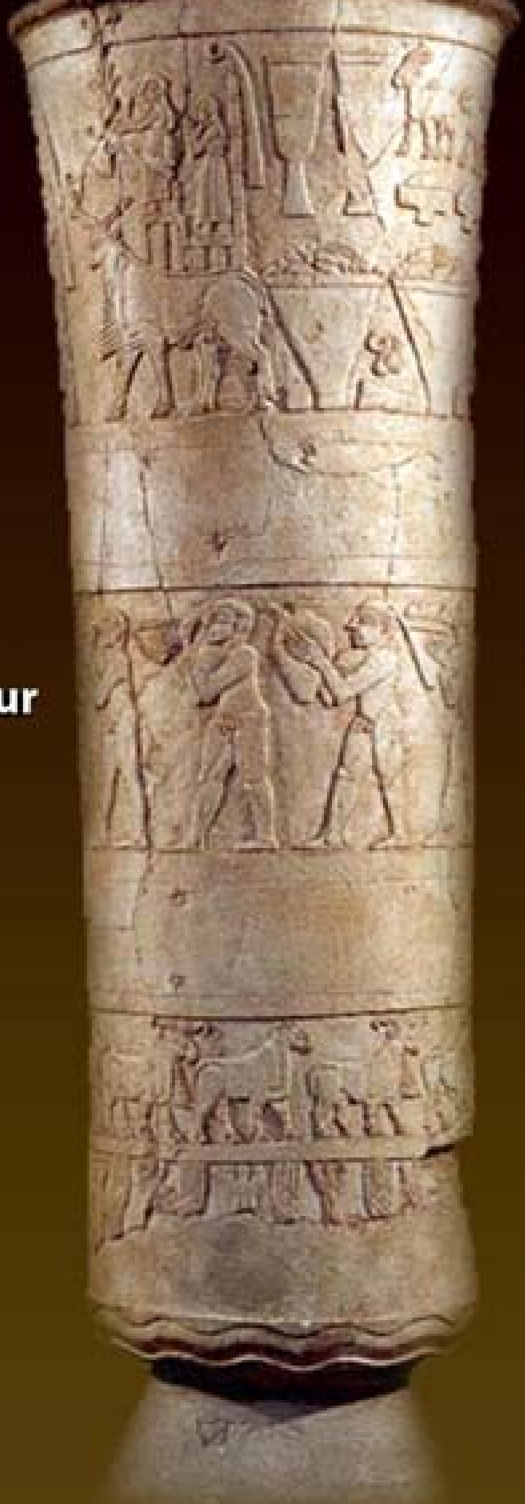


CD-ROM Features:

- Classroom presentation quality
- Ability to create your own slideshows
- Ability to copy and paste into documents
- Lengthy captions written and edited by noted scholars
- Software runs on Microsoft and Macintosh platforms

More information Archaeology and Religion in Pictures

Table of Contents



Introduction

With the news and developments in Iraq commanding the attention of Western media, much of the world has been focused on the tumultuous political situation there. Although the dramatic events of the last several decades dominate much of our attention, the fact is that modern Iraq is the troubled heir of some of human history's most important empires. The ancient Sumerian, Babylonian, Akkadian, Assyrian and Achaemenid empires all ruled in this land, and their legacy has influenced some of the most fundamental aspects of Judeo-Christian society.

The connections between the Western world and the region that was ancient Iraq extend back millennia. However, it wasn't until the 19th century that Western scholars began to study the ancient Near East in earnest, and began to discover just how crucial these cultures were to Western development. This collection of articles details some of the ways in which these ancient Near Eastern civilizations have impressed themselves on our Western culture. It examines the evolving relationship that modern scholarship has with this part of the world, and chronicles the present-day fight to preserve Iraq's cultural heritage, which is intrinsically linked to our own.

Since the 19th century, scholars have speculated that the Biblical creation story may have its origins in the ancient traditions of Mesopotamian religion. In his article entitled "The Genesis of Genesis: Is the Creation Story Babylonian?" Victor Hurowitz examines the connections of the Judeo-Christian creation story to the Mesopotamian myth known by its Akkadian name *Enūma Eliš* (meaning "when above" or "when on high," taken from the first two words of the text). He begins by explaining what the *Enūma Eliš* is, and points out the similarities between the 1,059-line Mesopotamian poem and certain elements of the Biblical creation story. The discussion of these parallels is not a new one; Hurowitz notes that Assyriologist George Smith shocked the western world by speculating on the connection in his 1872 publication *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*.

Since then, the notion that *Enūma Eliš* provided the material for the Biblical creation story has become deeply rooted in the collective psyche of Biblical scholars—so much so, as Hurowitz notes, that most modern commentaries on Genesis include a discussion of the Mesopotamian text, which some scholars believe originated as long ago as the 18th century B.C. Despite the similarities that exist in both texts, Hurowitz explains that to view the relationship between them as singular and isolated would be overly simplistic. Indeed, the similar elements that exist in both *Enūma Eliš* and Genesis also exists in other examples of Near Eastern literature, and there are facets of the Genesis story that do not exist in *Enūma Eliš* at all, but which are reflected in other ancient texts.

Perhaps, Hurowitz says, the emphasis on *what* has been incorporated into the Genesis story from other ancient sources is not as important as *why*—a thought-provoking comment that he goes on to explain in detail. In the process, Hurowitz's piece underscores the intrinsic link between the ancient Near East and the concepts and ideologies that are prevalent in modern Western culture today.

Yet, it was not until the 19th century when the western world really sat up and took notice of the archaeological treasures coming out of the region that today comprises modern Iraq. In her article "Backwards Glance: Americans at Nippur," Katharine Eugenia Jones recounts the adventures—and misadventures—of the first American archaeological expedition to the region.

Battling heat, malevolent insects, sandstorms, disease and uncooperative co-workers, John Punnett Peters led an expedition to the ancient Sumerian city of Nippur. The project was bankrolled by the Babylonian Exploration Fund (BEF), an organization formed specifically to support Peters and his proposed project. Enthusiasm for excavations in the region was high: European archaeologists had made a wave of discoveries in the preceding decades that captured the imagination of scholars and collectors across the Atlantic, and it was high time that the Americans got in on the action.

Jones documents the trials and foibles of Peters' first season, which was considered by Peters to be a "failure and disaster." However, three more seasons were subsequently funded by the BEF, and tens of thousands of tablet fragments were eventually recovered from the site. It was not, perhaps, a stellar beginning, but it was *a* beginning, and the Western world would never again be able to ignore the substantial contributions of the ancient Near East.

But what did people really think of the art and artifacts pouring in from the excavations of ancient Mesopotamian sites? In his article "Europe Confronts Assyrian Art," Mogens Trolle Larsen answers this very question, the answer to which seems to be "not much"—at least at the beginning.

Larsen examines the beginning of European interest in the ancient Near East, which began in the mid-19th century. When Englishman Austen Henry Layard began to uncover examples of Assyrian art at Nimrud in 1846, not even the local inhabitants of the region were very impressed. His findings were examined by his compatriot Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, a well-known Near Eastern scholar who pronounced the style of the

sculptures as “crude and cramped” and generally lacking in “aesthetic appeal.” While acknowledging their historical value, scholars of the era found the artistic style to be generally unappealing, and lacking the characteristics of the ancient Hellenistic and Classical art that was considered by mid-19th century European society to be the epitome of artistic culture.

Despite the lack of zeal for Assyrian material culture insofar as its aesthetics, Larsen explains that a fascination with it began to develop as scholars started to examine Assyrian connections in Biblical texts. This process was greatly sped along by Rawlinson’s breakthrough deciphering of cuneiform script, which allowed for the translation of the inscriptions and tablets being sent back to Europe from excavations in the east. However, it would be some time before Assyrian art came to be fully appreciated by Western scholars as its own unique art form. By the beginning of the 20th century, there was enough Western interest in the region and its history that the British played a significant role in the establishment of Baghdad’s Archaeological Museum, which would become a repository for some of the greatest archaeological treasures of the ancient east in the world.

Unfortunately, the museum would become a casualty of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The fall of Baghdad was followed by the devastating looting of the museum, in which priceless artifacts were stolen or lost. In order to recover and record as many looted artifacts as possible, the U.S. set up the Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Group, a military-led coalition of law enforcement agencies headed by reservist Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, an assistant Manhattan district attorney who also holds a degree in Classics.

In “Firsthand Report: Tracking Down the Looted Treasures of Iraq,” Bogdanos himself recounts the events that followed the looting of the museum and how he and his team were able to recover some of the invaluable pieces that were taken from the museum in the dark days of April, 2003. While many precious objects, such as the famous Mask of Warka and the Bassetki statue, were recovered, many more are still missing. The quest to recover the pieces of Iraq’s heritage that were lost six years ago is ongoing. In the meantime, there is hope for the future of one of the world’s most important archaeological collections. After years of conflict, the National Museum in Baghdad has opened once again, and its collection has been carefully documented and made available online to people all over the world.

While the world remains focused on the political and military events unfolding in Iraq, it is perhaps worthwhile to recall the profound influence that this ancient land has had on western civilization over the millennia. Protecting the rich material culture of Iraq’s past is not just important for modern-day Iraqis, but also for today’s Western civilizations, whose origins are so closely tied to this ancient place.

Sarah K. Yeomans

Washington D.C.

July, 2009



Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Bridgeman Art Library

Hovering above the newly created earth, God fixes the "two great lights"—the golden sun and the silver moon—in the heavens (Genesis 1:14–19).

The Genesis of Genesis

Is the Creation Story Babylonian?

By Victor Hurowitz

On December 3, 1872, George Smith, a former bank-note engraver turned Assyriologist, stunned the Western world by announcing that he had discovered a Babylonian story of a great Flood resembling the well-known account of the Deluge in the Book of Genesis. Four years later, Smith published a collection of Mesopotamian myths and heroic legends entitled *The Chaldean Account of Genesis* ("Chaldean" being a synonym for Babylonian used in the Bible).[1] The book included Smith's own English translation and discussion of a Babylonian Creation myth and other mythological compositions that he had pieced together from cuneiform fragments discovered during the preceding quarter of a century by the British excavations at Kyunjik, ancient Nineveh.

About the Babylonian Creation myth, Smith wrote: "The story, so far as I can judge from the fragment, agrees generally with the account of the Creation in the Book of Genesis, but shows traces of having originally included very much more matter."

According to Smith, the biblical account of the Seven Days of Creation (Genesis 1:1–2:4a, also known as the Priestly Creation account [a]) was simply an abbreviated Hebrew version of a more ancient Babylonian tale.

A century and a quarter after Smith made his astounding announcement, the Babylonian Creation myth—now regularly called by its Akkadian name *Enūma Eliš* (after the first two words, meaning "When above")—is widely recognized for its great importance to the history of ancient Mesopotamian religion. But for most Bible readers, the significance of *Enūma Eliš* (pronounced eh-NOO-ma eh-LEESH) lies in its perceived connection to the Creation story in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and a few other biblical passages relating to the Creation and to a primordial conflict between the Israelite deity YHWH and some vicious sea monsters.

The notion that the biblical Creation story depends heavily on *Enūma Eliš* is so entrenched that most modern commentaries on Genesis mention the connection. Any compendium of ancient Near Eastern texts related to the Bible will include *Enūma Eliš.* The curriculum for teaching Bible in secular Israeli high schools has been revised to include the teaching of *Enūma Eliš.* Nahum Sarna's classic *Understanding Genesis* devotes four pages to the myth.[2] Alexander Heidel's widely used collection of Mesopotamian Creation myths, *The Babylonian Genesis* (written "not for the professional Assyriologist but rather for the Old Testament scholar and the Christian minister"), lends 58 pages to parallels between the Babylonian and biblical texts.[3]

But was George Smith right? Was the author of the Genesis Creation account heavily influenced by this ancient Babylonian tale? To answer this, we must first ask, What is *Enūma Eliš?*

First and foremost, *Enūma Eliš* is a poem, consisting of 1,059 lines written in the Akkadian language and inscribed in cuneiform on seven tablets.[4] The story that this great poem tells is a myth; that is, it explains the world as a reflection of divine activities and relationships between gods.

Tablet 1. It is the timeless, mythic past when nothing existed apart from two personified masses of water, Tiamat (sea water) and Apsû (spring water). These proto-divine male and female figures engaged in an endless mingling of their waters that we might call the “Big Bang.”[b] Such dalliance led inevitably to pregnancy (of both partners) and the birth of several gods. As time passed the baby gods grew into big gods, who were a rowdy bunch, partying constantly at home, which happened to be the watery realm that was the body of Tiamat. This wild behavior raised the ire of Apsû, who, as typical of haggard fathers throughout time, decided to end it all and kill the kids and the kids’ kids and their kids, too. He plotted the act with his vizier Mummu, but the dastardly design got out, giving the young ones a chance to defend themselves, and, to be sure, one of the younger gods, Ea, ended up killing his great-great grandfather Apsû, stripping him of his divine regalia and building his own house on the body of his slain ancestor. Ea and his spouse, Damkina, immediately moved in, and the two of them set about making love and having a baby: Marduk.

The newborn infant was no regular lad. Four pairs of eyes and four pairs of ears (compare the four-faced creatures of Ezekiel 1:6) made him very attentive and gave him excellent peripheral vision, but he grew up rapidly and became a bit obstreperous.



By Permission of the Trustees of the British Museum

George A. Smith (1840–1876). An amateur Assyriologist, Smith was hired by the British Museum to catalogue cuneiform inscriptions discovered by Austen Henry Layard at Kyunjik (ancient Nineveh). He gained international attention when he announced his discovery of a Babylonian Deluge story similar to the Biblical account of Noah’s Flood.

His favorite game was throwing dust into a set of four-winds (a present from grandfather Anum) and muddying up great-great-great granny Tiamat. This childish behavior may not have disturbed recently widowed and long-suffering Tiamat, but it did get on the nerves of the gods living within her; and they, playing on her sense of guilt over having failed to come to the aid of her late husband, cajole and convince her to take up arms and put

an end to Marduk's intolerable behavior and their consequent suffering. In order to do the task, she has a certain Ummu Hŭbur (the name means "Mother Noise") produce for her a swat team of 11 raging, poisonous monsters at whose head she appoints the god Kingu.

Tablet 2. The younger gods, threatened by these scary beasts, fly into a panic and start looking for someone to come to their rescue. Ea, who got word of the war preparations, first approaches his grandfather Anšar (the deified horizon) and then daddy, Anum (the sky god), and reports the dire situation, but they do not come to the rescue, so Chicken-Little style the whole bunch of them ends up appealing for help from none other than the ultimate cause of their woes, Marduk. Marduk opportunistically accepts the invitation on the condition that if he defeats Tiamat and saves the gods, they will obey his commands. He will be their supreme, unchallenged ruler.

Tablet 3. In order to conclude an agreement, an envoy named Gaga is dispatched to Lahmu and Lahāmu (Anšar's parents), and all the gods gather at a grand banquet with lots of eating and drinking. When they are sufficiently inebriated, they ratify the agreement and enthrone Marduk as number one god.[5]

Tablet 4. At the enthronement celebration Marduk is asked to prove the power of his word by making a constellation vanish and reappear, which he immediately does. "He spoke with his mouth, and the constellation disappeared; he spoke again with his mouth, and the constellation was formed," the text tells us. After this display of verbal creativity, the gods outfit him with royal regalia, arm him and send him off to meet Tiamat. The myth reaches its climax in a decisive duel to the death between champion Marduk and Tiamat. Marduk arms himself with a bow and arrow, mace, net, four winds (probably the toy that Anum had given him as a child), and seven special winds designed to get inside Tiamat and give her gas. He mounts a chariot drawn by winds that can apparently move in all four directions.[6] For armor and headgear, he dons terrifying divine radiance, and, lest he be wounded, he also carries in his mouth an incantation, and holds in his hand a plant for warding off poison. Fully suited and geared up, he goes off to find Tiamat. When he meets her, they engage in a war of words and finally they lock in battle. At this point, Marduk opens his net with the intent of bagging her in it and then "the wicked wind which was sneezing behind him he directed into her face."[7] This is surely a thinly veiled way of saying that he broke wind in her face. As if this were not enough, Tiamat opens her mouth wide to swallow the wind dispatched from his rear but in the end she fills up with wind, developing stomach cramps and constipation. Finally, Marduk shoots his arrow at her and splits her belly.[8] With Tiamat defeated and, literally, deflated, the gods supporting her go into hiding and the 11 terrible monsters are captured and led away. Finally, Marduk captures Kingu, the god who was leading the monsters, and takes away the tablets of destiny that Tiamat had given him before the battle. The war over and the enemy rounded up, Marduk returns to his captive, Tiamat, splits open her head with his mace, and has the wind blow away her blood. He next splits open her body "like a drying fish," creates the heavens in the upper half, and establishes there a divine dwelling place, Ešarra, which is the mirror image of Ea's subterranean dwelling place, Apsû.

Tablet 5. At this point "Creation"—or, rather, the ordering of the known world—starts. Working more or less from top to bottom, Marduk installs in the appropriate parts of Tiamat's corpse the heavenly bodies in the heavens, meteorological phenomena in the atmosphere, and mountains, subterranean waters, the Euphrates and

Tigris, the bond of heaven and earth, the netherworld and the oceans in and on the earth. Marduk then celebrates his triumph by distributing trophies and displaying vanquished enemies. He dons royal garments, and the gods declare him king and accept his authority. He then proposes to build Babylon to serve as a lodging place for gods who go up and down between the subterranean Apsû and heavenly Ešarra (compare Genesis 28:10–22, in which Jacob dreams of angels ascending and descending a staircase that reaches to the heavens).[9] The gods eagerly accept this proposal.

Tablets 6 and 7. But before Marduk carries out his plan, he decides to help relieve the gods of their work by creating Man. Actually; creating Man is only his suggestion, for the actual act is carried out by his father, Ea. The creation of Man is described only briefly and elliptically; we learn only that Man was made from the blood of Kingu, who was slaughtered as punishment for having led the rebel gods. Having created Man, the gods proceed to carry out Marduk's plan to build Babylon, and in particular its main temple, Esagila. The gods mold bricks for a year, and when the temple is finally in its place as a rest stop between subterranean Apsû and heavenly Ešarra, all the gods of heaven and the underworld sit down together at a grand dedication banquet. This ceremony is another opportunity for reaffirming allegiance to Marduk and glorifying him by proclaiming his 50 names along with intricate explanations of each one.

The poem concludes:

> The [wo]rd of Marduk who created the Igigi-gods,
> [His/Its] let them [ ], his name let theme invoke.
> Let them sound abroad the song of Marduk,
> How he defeated Tiamat and took kingship.[10]

How much does this strange and exciting tale really resemble the Creation account of Genesis 1:1–2:4a and other biblical references to Creation? What kind of relationship, if any, is there between these texts?

The concluding couplet of *Enūma Eliš,* quoted above, suggests one of the most significant differences. Here, as in many Mesopotamian works, the author explains to the readers what the text they have just read is really about. In this case, he defines the entire composition as a hymn or song in praise of Marduk, who created the great gods (Igigi), defeated Tiamat and then assumed the throne. Compare this with the concluding line of the biblical Creation account:

> Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created.
>
> (Genesis 2:4a, New Jewish Publication Society Version)

In short, Genesis 1 is about the Creation, while *Enūma Eliš* is about the creator. That's why near the end of *Enūma Eliš,* the gods bless Marduk, hero of the story, while at the end of the Creation account, God, hero of the story, blesses and sanctifies the Sabbath, his final creation. Further, in Genesis 1 God sees several times that

what he has created is good, while in *Enūma Eliš* the gods on several occasion express approval for Marduk and what he has promised to do or has done.

The two stories also vary in tone. Genesis 1:1–2:4a is a tightly structured narrative, simple in language but stately in elevated prose style and marked by use of repetition, formulaic language, and command-fulfillment sequences ("God said, 'Let there be' ... and there was"), all of which suggest divine planning, control and transcendence. *Enūma Eliš,* in contrast, is a dramatic narrative poem in which tension builds and then is relieved again and again. Moreover, it is (in my opinion) a comic-heroic work not lacking in frivolity. Though some refer to *Enūma Eliš* as the Babylonian Genesis, this is an unfortunate appellation—encouraging readers to approach the text with religiosity and reverence, when they might better bring a sense of humor and a taste for adventure.

Nevertheless, from the Victorian period on, numerous scholars have attempted to draw parallels between Genesis 1 and *Enūma Eliš*—especially Tablet V, on the ordering of Creation. George Smith, in his *Chaldean Account of Genesis*, listed several, from the watery chaos that precedes Creation (see Genesis 1:1) through Marduk's and God's satisfaction with Creation: "And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:12, etc.).

In 1902, Bible scholar Friedrich Delitzsch offered one of the most famous discussions of the Bible and *Enūma Eliš* in the first of his *Babel und Bibel* lectures, delivered before Kaiser Wilhelm II.[11] In this lecture Delitzsch solemnly announced that Babylonian sources preserved more ancient and thus more original forms of full cycles of stories found in the Bible. Delitzsch suggested that the biblical authors had transferred directly to YHWH, God of Israel, the heroism of Marduk, god of Babylon, as known from *Enūma Eliš.* He offered a handful of biblical examples, including Job 9:13, Psalm 89:10–11 and Psalm 74:13–15 (quoted here):

> It was You who drove back the sea with Your might,
> Who smashed the heads of the monsters in the waters;
> It was You who crushed the heads of Leviathan,
> Who left him as food for the denizens of the desert,
> It was You who released springs and torrents,
> Who made the mighty rivers run dry.

Delitzsch showed his audience a cylinder seal bearing a picture of Marduk with one large eye and one large ear, standing on a dragon and holding a weapon in his right hand. This seal, which had been discovered by German excavators, was cited by Delitzsch as the background for Isaiah 51:9–10 and Job 26:12–13, both of which describe the Lord striking down the sea monster Rahab and piercing a snake or dragon.

According to Delitzsch, the Priestly author of the Creation account in Genesis 1:1–2:4a, in contrast to the authors of Psalms, Job and Isaiah, tried to remove all mythological traces from his text, yet he was not entirely successful. Trace elements of Babylonian myth could be found throughout Genesis, said Delitzsch. For example, the light-splitting of the Deep (Hebrew *Tehôm*) in Genesis 1 recalls Marduk splitting the watery goddess Tiamat.

Delitzsch was not saying anything new,[12] but he created a sensation throughout Europe and America by introducing the connection between *Enūma Eliš* and the Bible to the popular consciousness, from the Kaiser on

down. Delitzsch also gained attention and support for his subjective, anti-Semitic and anti-Christian insinuations that Mesopotamian religion was on an equal if not higher level than that of the Hebrew Bible, and that the Bible contains no religious truth of its own but is only an accumulation of shallow literature drawn from Babylonian texts.[c] If the generation preceding Delitzsch used archaeological and Assyriological discoveries to prove the truth of the Bible, from his time on the same evidence would be enlisted in demonstrating the Bible's inferiority.[d]

Alexander Heidel, in his well-known book *The Babylonian Genesis*, offers a clear summary of the parallels (he calls them "points which invite comparison") that Smith, Delitzsch and other early scholars had detected:

> Thus *Enūma elish* and Genesis 1:1–2:3 both refer to a watery chaos, which was separated into heaven and earth; in both we have an etymological equivalence in the names denoting this chaos [Hebrew *Tehôm* and Akkadian *Tiamat*]; both refer to the existence of light before creation of the luminous bodies; both agree as to the succession in which the points of contact follow upon one another; and in both cases the number seven figures rather prominently. And turning to the poetic writings of our Old Testament literature, we find quite a number of passages which, like the story of Marduk's fight with Tíâmat, treat of a conflict between the creator and various hostile elements.

Heidel adds to this list the divine nature of the participants in Creation; *creatio ex nihilo*—creation out of nothing; polytheism and monotheism in the respective stories; primeval chaos; primeval darkness; creation of the firmament; creation of the earth; creation of the luminaries; creation of plant and animal life; creation of man; the word of the creators; divine rest; the seven tablets and the seven days; and the general outlines of events in *Enūma Eliš* and Genesis 1:1–2:3.

But Heidel concludes:

> The similarities are really not so striking as we might expect ... In fact, the divergences are much more far-reaching and significant than are the resemblances, most of which are not any closer than what we should expect to find in any two more or less complete creation versions (since both would have to account for the same phenomena and since human minds think along much the same lines) which might come from entirely different parts of the world and which might be utterly unrelated to each other.[13]

What Heidel does consider striking, however, is "an identical sequence of events as far as the points of contact is concerned." In other words, of all the points mentioned above, only a few are really highly similar, but these particular points appear in the same order in the respective compositions. This indeed seems to be a strong argument in favor of dependence.

In discussing the possible connection between Marduk and the God of the Hebrew Bible, Heidel noted that the idea of a primeval war between a god and the sea is an idea born in the West and imported into Mesopotamia, so the Bible would more likely have borrowed it from closer neighbors than the Babylonians. Here,

Heidel relies on evidence in myths discovered at Ugarit (on the Mediterranean coast of modern Syria) a decade after the First World War (and *ipso facto* unavailable to Smith and Delitzsch).

Proof that this was indeed the case comes from the words the Bible uses for the sea monster. On the fifth day of Creation, in Genesis 1:21, God creates *Tannîn*, often translated "sea serpents"). This same creature appears as *tnn*, or Tunnan, in Ugaritic myth:

> Surely I fought Yamm [Sea], the Beloved of El
> Surely I finished off River, the Great God,
> Surely I bound Tunnan and destroyed (?) him.[14]

The biblical Leviathan (Psalm 74) has its parallel in *ltn* (Litan), who battles god in another Ugaritic myth:

> When you killed Litan, the Fleeing Serpent,
> Annihilated the Twisty Serpent,
> The Potentate with Seven Heads,
> The heavens grew hot, they withered.[15]

Assyriologist Wilfred Lambert, who is preparing the eagerly awaited authoritative edition of *Enūma Eliš,* notes that many of the parallels between the Babylonian poem and the Bible are as common throughout Near Eastern literature as to be insignificant.[16] The watery beginnings of the universe have parallels not only in other Mesopotamian Creation myths but even in Egyptian and Greek texts and thus cannot be evidence of particularly Babylonian influence. The splitting of the waters (in Genesis, on the second day) is uniquely parallel to the splitting of aqueous Tiamat in *Enūma Eliš,* although the splitting of other substances is well attested in Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, Egyptian and Greek myths. As for the third day, Lambert finds a Mesopotamian parallel to the separation of the sea from the dry land, but it is not from *Enūma Eliš.* The most important parallel Lambert finds is with the seventh day, the Sabbath. Man is created in *Enūma Eliš* to give rest to the gods. If so, both *Enūma Eliš* and Genesis 1:1–2:4a climax with divine rest.[17] All told, Lambert sees the connections between Genesis 1 and *Enūma Eliš* as relatively few in number.

As recent scholarship is making clear, simplistic comparison between *Enūma Eliš* and the biblical tradition—as if the Bible were directly dependent on *Enūma Eliš* and it alone—is patently untenable. And yet there is clearly some kind of relationship. *Enūma Eliš* appears to be one of a range of sources that the biblical authors drew upon.

But although Delitzsch and Smith dismissed this borrowing as naive and mechanical, I believe something far more thoughtful and thought-provoking was taking place. The literary character of *Enūma Eliš* itself offers an example of how and why the Biblical author drew on this source.

Enūma Eliš is on the surface a unified work with a clear, consistent plot and message.[18] Yet it, too, adopted and assimilated numerous ideas and literary themes from earlier sources.

So, for instance, the notion of the creation of the gods and the world by sexual intercourse and birth is already found in Sumerian sources. Young gods who prevent their parents from sleeping, and, indeed, divine unrest and sleep deprivation are central themes in the *Atra-hąsis* myth dating to the Old Babylonian period (first half of the second millennium B.C.E.), with roots in the Sumerian myth of Enki and Ninmaḫ.

Marduk in *Enūma Eliš* has four eyes and four ears. This reminds us of Ezekiel's chariot vision, but more important is a bronze statue found near Ishchali (ancient Neribtum, Iraq) dating from the Old Babylonian period representing an identically endowed deity. If this statue is not Marduk himself it is without doubt a god of the same species.[19]

The sequence of events of giving the Tablets of Destiny to Kingu, danger threatening the gods, the gods' panic, the appeal to several gods in search of a champion who will defeat the monster holding the tablets, and the eventual transfer of the Tablets of Destiny to the victorious champion has a close parallel in the Akkadian myth about the god Ninurta's defeat of the Anzû bird.[20]

The 11 monsters in Tiamat's retinue are also parallel to 11 monsters that fought alongside the Anzû.[21] The war between Marduk, with his army of winds, and Tiamat, who embodies the sea, has parallels in earlier Western myths about a conflict between a storm god and a sea god. A Middle Bronze Age silver goblet from 'Ain-Samiyah, Israel, is decorated with a similar mythological scene that the late Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin interpreted as the slaying of Tiamat by Marduk.[22] This scene is similar to one on a clay plaque from Khafaje, in eastern Iraq, of the Isin-Larsa period (late third to early second millennium B.C.E.) showing Marduk slaying Tiamat. Creating the cosmos by splitting the body of defeated Tiamat reflects Sumerian beliefs according to which the world was created by splitting various primeval cosmic elements. Creating man by mixing blood from a slain rebel god into the body of the man is rooted in accounts found in *Atra-hąsis* and Enki and Ninmąh.

In *Enūma Eliš,* Babylon is built by the gods who mold bricks. A similar description about the building of Nippur is found in a Sumerian hymn in honor of that city.[23] And finally, Marduk's 50 names are somehow related to 50, the symbolic number of Ellil, the chief god in the Mesopotamian pantheon.

The author of *Enūma Eliš* is deliberately attributing to Marduk and Babylon acts ascribed to other gods and cities in other myths. The author is stealing the thunder of these gods, undermining them in favor of Marduk. When Marduk receives Ellil's fifty names, he in effect becomes Ellil. When the gods build Babylon instead of Nippur, Babylon becomes the new religious capital. Most important, when Marduk defeats the 11 monsters that Ninurta fought in the ancient Anzû myth, Marduk son of Ea, god of Eridu, in effect usurps Ninurta son of Enlil, god of Nippur. *Enūma Eliš* is a story about Marduk that challenges a story about Ninurta. It reflects a political-theological competition over primacy in the pantheon and supremacy of the capital city.

These tales of Marduk spawned further debate. An ancient Babylonian commentary praises Marduk;[24] an Assyrian commentary satirizes him.[25] What appears to have been an alternate Assyrian version of at least parts of *Enūma Eliš*—known only from some fragmentary manuscripts found at Aššur—offers a competing version of events by replacing Marduk's name with Anšar, a name given to Aššur, chief god in the Assyrian pantheon.[26] Wall reliefs in the *Akītu* (New Year's) House built by the Assyrian king Sennacherib depict Aššur, not Marduk, riding his chariot and vanquishing Tiamat.

The ancient Near East was full of conflicting claims to supremacy of this or that god or city over all others. The Bible is part of this polemic. The biblical authors borrowed from foreign Creation stories in order to make the best case possible for YHWH, God of Israel. They were participating in a contemporary international debate on the basis of data considered basic and agreed upon by all.

For example, the preexistence of water may have been considered a “scientific” fact, common knowledge. In *Enūma Eliš* this water is personified as Tiamat; in “monotheistic,” “nonmythological” Genesis 1, the watery Deep is “just water.” Here, the biblical author is trying to correct the record.

The view of the world as a bubble with water above and below was a commonly held “scientific” truth at the time of the Bible, so it need not have been borrowed from a particular literary source. This water had to be parted *somehow* in order to form the bubble, and authors throughout the Near East had to decide how within the framework of their own beliefs. Marduk does this by physically splitting Tiamat, the personified waters. Genesis 1 has God ordain a firmament in the demythologized waters by simply speaking.

In *Enūma Eliš,* divine sleep deprivation is a constant problem. Tiamat and Apsû can’t sleep so they try to kill their noisy kids. Man is created to give the gods rest, and Babylon is built to provide a resting place for gods in transit on a cosmic journey. This idea is rooted in the Mesopotamian myths of Enki and Ninmah or *Atra-hąsis*.[27] In Genesis 1:1–2:4a God “ceases” and sanctifies the Sabbath, but in Exodus 31:17, a Priestly passage connected with the author’s Creation story in Genesis, God “puts his heart at rest/is satisfied” *(wayyinnāpaš)*.

It was common belief in the ancient Near East that a high god in a pantheon had to defeat the sea and create the world. A god, whoever he might be, had to act in a godly manner and do godly things! But the Priestly author of Genesis 1 gave the story a new spin. Rather than having God vanquish rebellious monsters, he had God create them (compare Psalm 104:25 where God creates Leviathan to play with), thus showing God’s superiority from the start.

In light of all this and more, it is impossible to accept today in a simplistic manner the claims of Smith or Delitzsch that the biblical authors took the Babylonian Story of Creation, that is, *Enūma Eliš,* and simply applied it to YHWH, God of Israel. The specific parallels are fewer than originally thought, and even the best ones are not entirely certain. However, both the Bible and *Enūma Eliš* are products of the ancient Near East, each accepting common beliefs and knowledge, and each developing them in their own unique manner. They should be studied by modern scholars as mutually illuminating not only for what they hold in common but for the unique ways in which each presents their common heritage.[28]

Backward Glance: Americans at Nippur

By Katharine Eugenia Jones

The heat is oppressive, even in winter. You could get used to the fleas and the scorpions, but "the flies [are] the most terrible pests … The countless myriads of tickling, buzzing, biting things from which there [is] no escape from dawn to dusk, in house or field, in motion or at rest." Your traveling companions are writing letters to your boss back home stabbing you in the back. You're surrounded by "a half-savage people," who are "vilely dirty," "unprogressive and unlovely."[1] Now, just as you're packing to go back home, these same locals set fire to your camp, burning everything in sight and stealing several saddlebags full of money.

It's April 17, 1889, you're in Nippur, Mesopotamia, on the first American archaeological expedition to the Near East, and things aren't going too well.

The expedition was the brainchild of John Punnett Peters, an Episcopal priest who received one of the first Ph.D.s granted in the United States—from Yale, in Semitic languages, in 1876. Peters manned a church for only a few months before deciding he preferred the academic life. By 1886, he was teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. He also held an interest in Near Eastern archaeology. After the newly formed American Oriental Society led a tour of potential archaeological sites in the Near East in 1884, Peters took the lead in the drive for an American excavation in the area, stirring up interest in the popular press in New York and raising funds to underwrite an expedition.

His main backers were the brothers Clark—Edward White and Clarence—who were important benefactors of the University of Pennsylvania and, in the wake of Peters' enthusiasm, founders of the Babylonian Exploration Fund (BEF), specifically set up to pay for Peters' proposed expedition to Mesopotamia. Edward Clark had toured the Near East in his youth and had retained a fascination with ancient worlds. He and Clarence hoped that sponsoring an expedition would garner them a different kind of respect than they received by just being rich and powerful.

Popular interest in ancient cultures was high, sparked by discoveries made by European archaeologists. The French diplomat Paul Emile Botta and the English adventurer Austen Henry Layard had rediscovered the Assyrian Empire with their work at Sargon II's palace near Khorsabad and in Nineveh in the 1840s. The massive sculptures and reliefs they found demonstrated to many people that the Assyrian Empire was as big and mighty as the Bible implied. But, to scholars, the more important find may have been the cuneiform tablets Layard unearthed at Nineveh. In 1872 archaeology took a second leap forward when another Englishman, George Smith, deciphered some of these tablets and found an Akkadian flood story similar to that found in the Bible.

That discovery opened the floodgates, so to speak, to interest in Assyria. For scholars concentrating on ancient history, Smith's translations fueled the theory that the tablets from Nineveh simply retold even older stories, and that the Assyrians and Babylonians had not invented their writing system. In their minds, there must have been an older mother-culture that served as the source of all that came later. Tablets discovered in southern Babylonia in the early 1880s made the final connection: The original culture was Sumerian.





Courtesy University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia

The first American dig in the Near East was led by John Punnett Peters in 1889 (Left). Although organizers from the University of Pennsylvania and the Babylonian Expedition Fund had hoped Peters would lead several more seasons of excavation at Nippur, in Mesopotamia, disputes between him and expedition Assyriologist Herman Hilprecht ended those ambitions in 1891. Assyriologist Herman Hilprecht (Right). His disputes with John Punnett Peters ended Peters' ambitions of leading more excavations at Nippur.

Enter Peters and the Clarks. The BEF would bankroll an expedition to the Sumerian city of Nippur, in southern Mesopotamia, but the University of Pennsylvania would coordinate the dig. Peters was named scientific director—he had no real archaeological experience, either in the field or in the lab, but then, neither did any other Orientalist in the United States in the late 1880s.

At the time, a conflict of interest existed between Assyriologists interested primarily in the texts recorded on tablets and archaeologists interested in the wider culture that field archaeology could reveal. There was also an inherent conflict in the expedition's administration, divided between the BEF and the University of Pennsylvania. The two conflicts were personified by Peters, who saw himself as an archaeologist with his first duty to the Clarks and the BEF, and Hermann Hilprecht, a young German Assyriologist at the University of Pennsylvania and the expedition's translator, who was tied to the University of Pennsylvania and its provost, William Pepper.

The conflict was exacerbated by the harsh conditions encountered in traveling to the dig site near what was then Niffur, Mesopotamia. The journey between the United States and Niffur took six months, including time spent buying supplies and negotiating the terms under which the Ottoman officials would allow the Americans to take home antiquities. After leaving the port of Aleppo, Syria, where they took off into the desert with a caravan of

61 camels, the troupe encountered blinding and suffocating sandstorms, rain and the resulting mud, scorpions, lizards and diseases—among them boils, ague, typhus, malaria and cholera. Conditions were so bad that John Dynely Prince, Peter's secretary, didn't even make it to the dig site; he had to be left behind in Baghdad because of illness.

Hilprecht sent a constant stream of letters to Provost Pepper in Philadelphia. He found the entire situation "beneath my dignity & that of my University."[2] He complained that his horse was the slowest and weakest of the lot and that he had not been given a pistol when others on the trip had. Only a secret, regular income from Pepper, he insisted, would keep him from being shortchanged by the expedition's photographer and business manager, John Henry Haynes. He also complained about scientific director Peters, saying he had mishandled the negotiations for the *firman* (the contract with Turkish officials), that he had made a poor choice in selecting Nippur as the dig site (Nippur was never a significant military or political center, but it was the religious capital of both Sumer and Akkad), and that he was generally incompetent. Hilprecht pressed Pepper to cancel the expedition.

No one really knew what to expect in Nippur. Peters hoped the site would yield new treasures that would demonstrate the greatness of Sumerian culture; Hilprecht was only interested in tablets that would flesh out Sumerian mythology, tablets he thought could be much more profitably obtained by simply buying them from the Turks in Istanbul and Baghdad. Once he arrived at the site in February 1889, Peters, who spoke no Arabic, hired 250 local workmen to do the actual digging, but the Americans, both because of their prejudice and because of their concerns about conflicts among the Arab groups, were afraid of the workers and treated them imperiously. The political situation didn't help: The Ottoman Turks had only nominal control over the area, just enough to cause resentment, not enough to keep order.

By April the excavation had settled into an uneasy routine. The treasure-versus-tablets controversy was settled: It had become evident that no great sculptures were to be found in Nippur, so the BEF sent orders for the group to concentrate on tablets. In this they met with some encouraging success. Then, on the night of April 14–15, 1889, a Turkish guard shot one of the Arab workers. The Americans had already planned to leave by the end of April; the chants they heard coming from the Arab camps that night made them speed up their plans. Before they could leave, the Arabs set fire to the camp. According to one expedition member "half the horses perished in the flames, firearms and saddlebags and $1000 in gold fell into the hands of the marauders, but all the antiquities were saved.[3]"

As Peters later said, "Our first year had ended in failure and disaster."[4] But the overall expedition didn't. The BEF and the University of Pennsylvania funded three more seasons in Nippur. After the debacle of the first season, only business manager Haynes and Peters agreed to return to Mesopotamia. Peters was again made director. They—and 350 native diggers—were in the field from January to March of 1890. Hilprecht divided his time between Philadelphia, Germany and Constantinople, translating tablets and deciding which should be sent to Philadelphia and which could remain with the Turks. The second season was at least as arduous as the first, and negotiations with the Ottomans were complicated and drawn out. When the BEF decided to raise funds for a third season in 1892, and asked Peters to lead it, he replied: "Impossible! Let Haynes go it alone."[5]

Haynes's lack of training in ancient cultures and ancient languages did not stop the one-time photographer and business manager. Hilprecht stayed in Constantinople, negotiating a new *firman* and cataloguing the cuneiform tablets in the Ottoman museum. Working for the BEF, Peters and Edward Clark provided guidance from Philadelphia. During 1893 and 1894, Haynes flooded Hilprecht with tablets of varying degrees of historical interest; Hilprecht in turn started pressuring Haynes to dig up "the lowest strata" of Nippur, without really knowing what this meant. Haynes became interested in the contours of the city of Nippur and in its architecture; the BEF wanted artifacts. Peters and other BEF representatives harangued Haynes for weekly reports and gave him contradictory orders about how and what to dig. The third expedition ended in March of 1895 with what appears to be Haynes's mental collapse.

In the summer of 1898 the BEF assumed that Haynes, having had three years to recuperate, would lead a fourth expedition. Haynes, newly married at age 50, agreed, so long as he could take his wife. Since Peters and the Clark brothers thought that Haynes's earlier problems had resulted from too much isolation, they agreed. In mid-January of 1900, Haynes literally hit pay dirt. Digging a spot that years earlier had been nicknamed "Tablet Hill," Haynes found what looked to be a library full of tablets, with piles and piles of clay "books." The BEF was so excited by the samples Haynes sent that they pressured Hilprecht to go and join him at Nippur. He stayed for ten weeks, completing his work in May 1900.

Everyone assumed there would be a fifth campaign, led by Hilprecht. But tensions between him and Peters led to the dissolution of the BEF and the end of excavations at Nippur, until the University of Pennsylvania sent another group in 1948.

But did the first 12 years of effort and headaches produce anything of substance? Yes—but not as much as was first assumed. Peters, Haynes and their laborers found tens of thousands of tablets and fragments, ranging from the third millennium to the late first millennium B.C. These included economic documents and copies of almost all of the important Sumerian literary works. Haynes found a ziggurat, though nobody at the time was particularly interested. Though Haynes's work was poorly documented, Peters' notebooks and sketchbooks are still useful. Peters and Hilprecht wrote two separate popular accounts of their finds. Only one volume of a planned series of scholarly final reports appeared, however. In the end, despite the hardships, fights and mental breakdowns, the expedition's results were, as *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* says, "mediocre."

Europe Confronts Assyrian Art

By Mogens Trolle Larsen

One civilization comes in contact with another. Their languages and scripts are different. Their forms of art are different. Their political arrangements are different. To make matters worse, one civilization flourished in the Iron Age (first millennium B.C.)—the other in the age of great museums, factories and railroads. When 19th-century A.D. Europeans “discovered” Assyrian art, just what did they see?

One morning in February 1846, a little over 150 years ago, the young Englishman Austen Henry Layard was returning to work after visiting his friend Sheikh Abd-ur-rahman, the head of a local Arab tribe. Layard had been in northern Mesopotamia for only three months, where he had begun to excavate a large mound called Nimrud.[a] In that time, he had struck up a friendship with the strikingly handsome and philosophical sheikh, with whom he went hunting for gazelle and hare in the steppe. As Layard rode into view of the Nimrud mound, a long low hill with a tower-like structure at its northern end, he was met by a couple of excited Arabs, who galloped towards him shouting, “Hurry, Bey, for they have found Nimrod himself!”

When they reached the mound, Layard saw that his workmen had uncovered an enormous, well-preserved stone head, more than 3 feet high. This was precisely what he had been dreaming of finding: one of the large stone bulls that guarded the main gateways in Assyrian palaces. (In fact, this colossal statue turned out to be a human-headed lion, or sphinx.) Just three years earlier the French archaeologist Paul Èmile Botta had found gigantic bulls at Khorsabad, the site of the ancient Assyrian city of Dur Sharrukin. Layard knew from Botta’s excavations that the colossi stood in pairs, flanking the entrances to important rooms. So Layard expected to find another statue at the other side of the doorway.

As he started removing dirt from the head, Abd-ur-rahman arrived with half his tribe. From the top of the trench, Layard could hear alarmed chanting: “There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet.” No one seemed sure that the head was really made of stone. After some hesitation, Abd-ur-rahman was persuaded to crawl into the trench to inspect the head more closely, and he determined that it was not the work of man. According to the sheikh, it was made by “infidel giants of whom the Prophet—peace be with him!—has said that they were higher than the tallest date tree; this is one of the idols which Noah—peace be with him!—cursed before the flood!”[1]

Nonetheless, Layard’s men continued digging, looking for the companion to the stone head. Before nightfall they found it. Layard ordered two of his most trusted men to guard the statues overnight—to prevent anyone from destroying the colossi in order to make sure they were dead. Then he withdrew to the village, slaughtered a sheep and threw a party for his workmen. Some wandering musicians in the neighborhood were called on to play, and the dancing continued through the night.

Layard was excited. Until this moment he had been uncertain about his prospects at Nimrud, but now he knew that he had found just what he was looking for: a large palace with walls adorned with limestone reliefs and doorways protected by monumental statues.Abd-ur-rahman, on the other hand, saw no point in the excavations.

After Layard uncovered a pair of bulls at another doorway in the palace and had them transported to the riverbank in order to have them shipped downriver to Baghdad (and eventually to London), his Arab friend somewhat sarcastically expressed his misgivings. "Wonderful!" he said.

> In the name of the Most High, tell me, O Bey, what you are going to do with those stones. So many thousands of purses spent upon such things! Can it be, as you say, that your person learn wisdom from them; or is it, as his reverence the Cadi declares, that they are going to go to the palace of your Queen, who, with the rest of the unbelievers, worships these idols? As for wisdom, these figures will not teach you to make any better knives, or scissors, or chintzes; and it is in the making of those things that the English show their wisdom.[2]

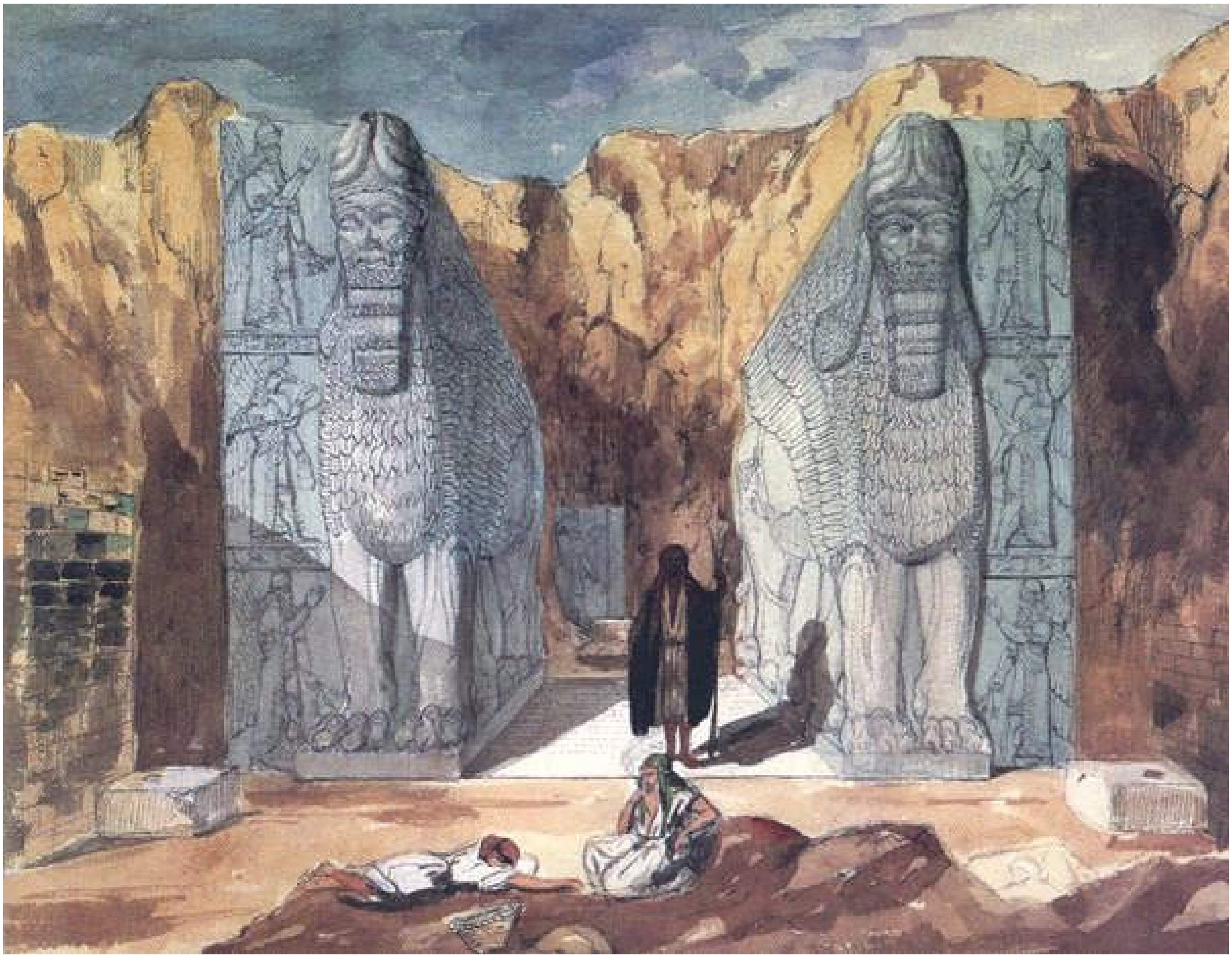
Layard was enraptured by these signs of a vanished ancient civilization, but even he was hard pressed to answer his friend's questions. Were the Assyrian discoveries important and interesting, and how could they be understood? What kind of wisdom did they contain? Were they beautiful, mysterious works of art or extravagant monstrosities?

One of the best-known Near Eastern scholars, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, was soon to weigh in. Rawlinson, the representative of the British East India Company in Baghdad, had already helped to decipher the Old Persian cuneiform script, and he was keenly interested in the cuneiform inscriptions that Layard was turning up in substantial quantities. The two men maintained regular contact by mail, which left Baghdad every fortnight for Istanbul, traveling up the Tigris River and stopping over in Mosul, where Layard had his headquarters.[b]

In July 1846 Layard sent his first consignment of reliefs on a raft down to Baghdad—12 cases of the best-preserved and most interesting sculptures he had found. He then anxiously waited for Rawlinson, the very first scholar to examine these ancient objects, to respond.

In a letter dated August 5, 1846, Rawlinson gave Layard his impressions of the Assyrian finds. He was very brief and did not seem all that interested. Rawlinson began by detailing his complaints about the bad climate; he thought his liver had been damaged, but the local doctor, an amiable alcoholic named Ross, had told him it was merely stomach trouble. The letter continued:

> Your cases arrived all right and we have been regaling our antiquarian appetites on the contents ever since. The dying lion and the two Gods (winged and Eagle headed) are my favorites. The battle pieces, Seiges [sic] etc. are curious, but I do not think they rank very highly as art. Ross is altogether disappointed with the specimens and I must confess I think the general style crude & cramped but still the curiosity of the thing is very great, if not a full compensation [for the lack of aesthetic appeal].[3]



British Museum

Assyrian kings carved great human-headed lions and bulls to watch over the entrances to important rooms and buildings, such as palace throne rooms or temples. The sphinxes depicted here—in an 1850 watercolor by the British artist Frederick Cooper, who accompanied Layard to the Near East—guarded Ashurnasirpal II's shrine to the god Ninurta in Kalhu (Nimrud).

Layard was deeply disappointed by this response. He wrote a desperate letter to Rawlinson, asking him how he could regard the sculptures as without any value and challenging him to explain the standard by which he judged them. Layard even feared that Rawlinson might withdraw his support for the Assyrian excavations, or that he wanted them stopped.

"I merely objected to their style & execution," Rawlinson wrote in his next letter to Layard, "which in my opinion have nothing whatever to do with value." As works of art, Rawlinson noted, the Assyrian sculptures failed to reach "the highest standard available"—provided by the Elgin Marbles, which had been installed in the British Museum only a few decades earlier.

For Rawlinson and most Victorians, the marble sculptures from the Parthenon were the height of human artistic expression. Compared to them, "the Nineveh marbles are not valuable as works of art." Their value lies in something else:

> The test is—can modern science learn anything from them?—Can a mere admirer of the beautiful view them with pleasure?—certainly not and in this respect they are in the same category with the paintings and sculptures of Egypt and India—but far be it from me to say that either one or the other be of no value. I look upon the Nimrud slabs as invaluable and my opinion of them would be the same were they ten times inferior to what they are. Their value consists of unfolding the history, theology, language, arts, manners, military skill, political relations to [sic] of one of the most illustrious nations of antiquity, and thus filling up an enormous blank in our knowledge of the early history of the world. Compared with this true & Catholic view of value I look upon artistical skill as altogether a secondary consideration.

A historian and Near Eastern scholar, Rawlinson thought that the Assyrian finds were important because they embodied history. Layard was rescuing this ancient civilization from "the Ocean of Time."

Nor was Rawlinson alone in finding the Assyrian carvings historically interesting but aesthetically deficient. In mid-19th-century Europe, classical Greek art was the standard by which all artworks were judged. Other artistic traditions, which followed different aesthetic rules, were considered inferior. This Eurocentric view of art had been defined in the 18th century by such classicists as the German scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who saw in classical Greek art the *beau ideal* of all art.[c]



Metropolitan Museum of Art

This 10-foot-high, 9-foot-long limestone colossus weighs more than ten tons. In structures built during Ashurnasirpal's reign, entrances were guarded by a pair of colossi: generally a human-headed lion and a human-headed bull. This sphinx and its companion are now beautifully displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York.

In England, the preeminence of Greek art became official doctrine—as anyone who has visited the British Museum in London will understand. Designed to house the treasures of the British nation, this magnificent building is shaped like a huge Ionic temple. The frieze above the museum's pillared entrance was carved by the British artist Richard Westmacott (1775–1856), who was called upon to give his opinion on the merits of Layard's reliefs after they had been installed in the museum. To a parliamentary commission, Westmacott declared that the Assyrian reliefs were entirely devoid of artistic qualities; therefore, they did not belong under the same roof as those miracles of perfection, the Elgin Marbles. Westmacott even argued that artists who studied the Assyrian reliefs too closely would find their sensibilities dulled: "The less people, in their capacity as artists, view objects of this kind, the better," he told the commission.[4] He was then asked whether the Nineveh reliefs might in some way contaminate the Parthenon marbles, inducing visitors to regard the Greek masterpieces with less interest. "No," he answered:

> Persons would look at the Nineveh Marbles and be thinking of their Bible at the time they were looking at them; they would consider them as very curious monuments of an age they feel highly interested in; but the interest in the Elgin Marbles arises from a distinct cause; from their excellence as works of art.

Many people agreed that too many "purses" were being spent on the Assyrian art. As the halls of the British Museum became filled with reliefs from Nimrud and Nineveh, people came to feel that enough was enough, that it was a waste of time and money to transport more objects from the ancient Assyrian sites to London. In 1851 the British journal *Athenaeum* carried an editorial in which the writer declared himself

> satiated with these repeated recurrences of the same formulae of expression,—and little disposed to recommend that an inch more of the valuable space in our Great National Building shall be given up to them [Assyrian carvings]. It is sufficient for the national honor that this country was among the first to possess any of these primitive specimens of sculpture, with the valuable lessons which they teach.[5]

Even Rawlinson, during a meeting with the Trustees of the British Museum, declared that the museum had acquired enough examples of Assyrian art. He wanted the museum to focus on inscriptions, especially historical ones.

Layard, as we might have expected, reacted differently. His youthful enthusiasm for discoveries he personally had made, coupled with a sensitivity to different artistic traditions (a heritage from his father, who was interested in early Italian art), allowed him to appreciate Assyrian art in a way many of his contemporaries could not. In a report published in the German periodical *Archäologische Zeitung* in early 1848, for example, Layard praised the skill of Assyrian sculptors. He expressed astonishment at their renderings of animals: "Lions and horses on these reliefs are of exceptional beauty. The horses belong to the purest Arab breed; they can be compared with the noblest Greek examples, not excluding the horses on the Parthenon." Interestingly, the

German editor added a discrete question mark at this point, indicating a polite skepticism that this could really be the case. The editor, of course, had not actually seen Assyrian sculptures; he just found it difficult to believe that they might compare favorably with the Parthenon frieze. Other than Layard, no one seemed to believe that these Assyrian sculptures were worthy of aesthetic enjoyment—the test Rawlinson had formulated.

And yet, these giant Assyrian bulls must have cast some kind of spell. Images of the great colossi frequently appeared in the British media—for example, in the popular magazine *Illustrated London News*. The huge statues themselves were prominently displayed in the British Museum, and they were the subject of Parliamentary inquiries. There was a kind of ineffable kinship between these stately, imposing creatures—which exuded a calm, serene sense of power—and the ideals of the Victorians. Were these stone sphinxes and bulls, and the relief scenes showing ancient kings and courtiers, symbols of empire? If the British felt little need to understand Assyrian art on its own terms, they nonetheless appropriated it for themselves.

Now recall the reaction of the startled Arabs, who looked upon that colossal Assyrian face with confusion and consternation. One is in no doubt about whose past the bulls and lions belonged to. Nonetheless, the Arabs and the English had at least one thing in common: They both appealed to their religious traditions in order to come to terms with the ancient Assyrians. As Westmacott said, when visitors to the British Museum saw the Assyrian sculptures, they thought of the Bible.

Even before it was known that the Assyrian palaces had been built by the very same kings—Tiglath-pileser, Sargon, Sennacherib and Esarhaddon—who figured prominently in the historical books of the Old Testament, the reliefs were seen as directly relevant to the understanding of the holy text. As soon as the Assyrian cuneiform texts began to be read, around 1852, this interest became even more intense.

Layard tells us that when he saw some of the sculptures being uncovered, he was reminded of biblical passages. The prophet Ezekiel, for example, describes pictures on the walls of an Assyrian palace: “male figures carved on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion, with belts around their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers—a picture of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea” (Ezekiel 23:14–15).[d] Layard felt sure that his reliefs were the very images described by Ezekiel. Perhaps the prophet had even seen the relief carvings and colossal statues before the palaces were destroyed? Another biblical hero, Daniel, dreamed of a beast that was “like a lion and had eagle’s wings” (Daniel 7:4). Perhaps Daniel was describing the very first colossus that Layard had discovered at Nimrud. In his first book on the excavations, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (1849), Layard makes numerous references to biblical passages.

While Layard used the Bible as a mine of information that would help him understand the Assyrian reliefs, most writers went in the other direction. They used the Assyrian discoveries for “the elucidation of Holy Writ,” as Joseph Bonomi put it in the subtitle of his popular book on the subject, *Nineveh and Its Palaces* (1852).

This was a time when doubts were being raised about the literal truth of the Bible. In Germany, scholars were applying the sort of critical analysis to the Bible that had been applied to other texts. The result was a school called the Higher Criticism, whose members considered parts of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, collections of myths pasted together into a more or less continuous narrative. Science also was producing

evidence that not every word of the Bible was literally true. Fossil and geological evidence, for example, suggested that the Earth was much older than the biblical chronology allowed.

As soon as Layard's *Nineveh and Its Remains* appeared, it became part of the debates over the historicity of the Bible. According to one reviewer, the discovery of the Assyrian palaces was as important as the discoveries in geology and astronomy—suggesting that archaeology, too, might supply evidence contrary to the Bible. Rawlinson had warned Layard that some people looked upon his activities with distrust—for example, in a March 1847 letter from Baghdad:

> They write me from England that Assyrian antiquities were exciting great interests and that the Clergy had gotten perfectly alarmed at the idea of there being contemporary annals whereby to test the credibility of Jewish history. A brother indeed of mine, a Fellow of Exeter College & joint Editor of the "Oxford Magazine" protests most vehemently against the further prosecution of the enquiry. Did you ever hear such downright rot?[6]

Nineveh is mentioned some 20 times in the Bible, and there are more than 130 references to Assyria. Direct, contemporaneous evidence from this ancient country might throw a sharp—perhaps revealing—light on the holy text. References to events and persons already known from the Bible were to be expected. And this would be compelling eyewitness testimony!

In August 1851 Rawlinson made the breakthrough that allowed him to decipher Assyrian cuneiform script, which recorded a Semitic language (Akkadian) spoken by both the Babylonians and the Assyrians. This extraordinary event was announced in a literary magazine in London—though, to Rawlinson's misfortune, the announcement came in the summer, when all the interested parties were away on holiday. Rawlinson had deciphered the text on the large bulls that guarded the entrance to the throne room of the palace of Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.) at Nineveh. He claimed to have "obtained from the annals of those kings contemporary notices of events which agree in the most remarkable way with the statements preserved in sacred and profane history."[7]

The bulls' inscription referred to a campaign led by Sennacherib against the southern Israelite kingdom of Judah. This cuneiform account from ancient Nineveh was so close to one found in the Hebrew Bible that there could be no doubt that they described the same events: Sennacherib invaded Israel, captured a number of Judahite cities (including Lachish) and then was stopped before the walls of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18–19; 2 Chronicles 32).

To the public and, in fact, most scholars, the fact that Assyrian sources mentioned biblical events represented a vindication of the Bible as a historical source. The fears of a clash between ancient texts and biblical traditions were quickly dispelled or seen as relatively unimportant; instead, we find an eager desire to pursue this new path, to "rescue" the Bible from Higher Criticism and support the increasingly vulnerable religious orthodoxy.

Throughout England lectures and sermons were delivered, often grounded in little concrete knowledge, on the Assyrian finds. In 1851 the prestigious Newdigate Prize was awarded to Alfred William Hunt, a scholar at

Corpus Christi College at Oxford, for a poem entitled “Nineveh,” which gave a colorful interpretation of the significance of Layard’s discoveries.

Everyone, it now seems, was relieved that the Bible was vindicated. In 1849 the reverend Joseph Sortain gave a spirited talk at Brighton on Layard’s excavations. He stressed that this was a momentous time when the Christian faith was being supported by science:

> Never, so much as now, has the anxious student of the highest of all truths—the Christian Faith—such grounds for gratitude to the scientific traveler in the Desert, or the cautious antiquarian in his closet.

And there were hopes that archaeology, that “scientific traveler in the Desert,” would discover texts of even greater significance. As late as 1876 the American divine John Philip Newman could express such dreams in endearingly naive and rosy terms:

> [W]ho can tell how much more remote such records may carry us into the past? The day may not be far distant when Nimrod’s Biography, Noah’s History of the Flood, and Adam’s Autobiography, shall become standard works among the civilized nations of the earth.[8]

Partly because of their idealization of the Greek *beau ideal*, and partly out of sheer ignorance, Westerners found little to like in Assyrian art. In the Assyrian texts, however, they found a connection. One result was that excavations conducted later in the century looked for archives and libraries. No more reliefs were brought back, but tens of thousands of clay cuneiform tablets began to accumulate in drawers in the British Museum.

The reliefs were, as Rawlinson described them, mere “curiosities.” Only in the last few decades, in fact, have scholars in England and the United States begun to study them seriously. By reconstructing the reliefs and colossi, along with the complex decorative schemes of the vast Assyrian palaces, we are beginning to understand these works of Assyrian art. We see them as beautiful, imposing, exquisitely chiseled. We see them as flush with meaning—giving expression to a cosmology in which a divinely sanctioned king helps maintain the order of the universe. We see them as capable of evoking awe and wonder.

Such ideas were not foreign to Layard or to other probing minds of his time. He later recalled those early days at Nimrud, when he watched the two great sphinxes being uncovered. One evening, as he watched the light flickering over their massive bodies, the stone lions seemed to come alive. “I shall never forget that night,” he wrote, “or the emotions which these venerable figures caused within me.” Soon, however, they would be ripped from their ancient home and transported to a distant world, where they would become, in Layard’s words, “a mere wonder-stock to the busy crowd of a new world.” They would become instructive examples of the decline and fall of empires, a chapter in the history of Western civilization.

The 19th-century British artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti even wrote a poem about the transformation of Layard's great sphinx into a lesson plan. In "The Burden of Nineveh," Rossetti describes visiting the Greek galleries of the British Museum and coming across a kind of intruder, the "winged beast of Nineveh":

> Now, thou poor god, within this hall
> Where the blank windows blind the wall
> From pedestal to pedestal,
> The kind of light shall on thee fall
> Which London takes the day to be:
> While school-foundations in the act
> Of holiday, three files compact,
> Shall learn to view thee as a fact
> Connected with that zealous tract:
> "Rome,—Babylon and Nineveh."[9]

Of course, Layard himself was ultimately responsible for unearthing and transporting the carvings—for wrenching them from their natural environment. Still, the directness of his feeling for Assyrian art is inspiring. He realized that these great bulls and lions, from the grand gateways of their palaces, had watched over a civilization we can only begin to imagine. Part of him felt that as they had guarded over the palace in its grandeur, they ought to guard over it in its destruction.[10]

Firsthand Report

Tracking Down the Looted Treasures of Iraq

By Matthew Bogdanos

The world watched in horror as the images were flashed all over the globe: In the chaos that surrounded the fall of Baghdad in April 2003, the Iraq Museum—home to a priceless collection of ancient objects from the birthplace of civilization—was being wildly looted.

These initial news reports indicated that more than 170,000 priceless treasures had been stolen from the museum in 48 hours. The list of missing objects read like a "who's who" of Near Eastern archaeology and included the Sacred Vase of Warka (the world's oldest known carved stone ritual vessel, from about 3200 B.C; the Mask of Warka (generally believed to be the world's oldest known naturalistic depiction of a human face, from about 3100 B.C.); the Golden Lyre of Ur (with a gold bull's head, from the Early Dynastic III Period, about 2600–2500 B.C.; the Bassetki Statue (one of the earliest known examples of the lost-wax technique of casting, dating to the Akkadian period, about 2250 B.C.; the Lioness Attacking a Nubian (an extraordinary eighth-century B.C. chryselephantine ivory plaque inlaid with lapis lazuli and carnelian and overlaid with gold); and the twin copper Ninhursag Bulls (among the oldest known bulls in relief, they were from the facade of the temple built by Mesannipadda, king of Ur, about 2475 B.C.

Also unaccounted for were the extraordinary riches recovered from the royal tombs of Ur (about 2600–2500 B.C.) and the Treasure of Nimrud, a spectacular collection of more than a thousand pieces of gold jewelry and precious stones from the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.

At the time, the U.S. had a highly classified, multi-agency task force in southern Iraq conducting counter-terrorist missions.[1] We had just identified a terrorist financing network (blowing open several safes containing tens of millions of freshly minted Iraqi dinars and U.S. dollars in a Ba'ath Party headquarters) and had discovered dozens of Chinese-made Seersucker missiles hidden in a warehouse. As soon as I heard of the looting, I immediately requested permission from General Tommy Franks, head of U.S. Central Command, to conduct a preliminary investigation into the looting of the Iraq Museum.

There had also been reports of possible U.S. military involvement in the looting itself. We could not, and would not, ignore these allegations (as the investigation was to show, claims of U.S. complicity turned out to be complete fabrications). I notified the command that I intended to conduct a thorough investigation. That was exactly what they wanted. My immediate boss, Air Force Major General Victor E. Renuart, Jr., referring to a nickname I had been given by the tabloids as a homicide prosecutor in New York, told me, "You know that 'pit bull' thing you do in New York? Do the same thing in Baghdad and get to the bottom of this." "One more thing," he added, "Don't get killed. That's an order."

Arriving in Baghdad on the 20th of April—eleven days after the statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled—our mission was to determine what had happened at the museum and to recover whatever antiquities we could. Given the lack of a functioning judicial system in Iraq and the nature of the losses, I immediately decided that our primary goal had to be the return of the stolen antiquities to the Iraqi people, not the criminal prosecution of the

offenders. Toward that end, we focused our efforts on the recovery of whatever had been stolen—whether days, years, or decades earlier—and decided to break our task into four components: (1) identifying what was missing; (2) sending photographs of missing items to the international law-enforcement and art communities to assist in intercepting the stolen objects in transit; (3) reaching out to Iraqi religious and community leaders to promote an amnesty program for anyone returning antiquities; and (4) conducting raids based on information developed about stolen artifacts.

Colonel Bogdanos stands next to a black-basalt stele that depicts a king as a lion-hunter. The stele, dating to about 3000 B.C., is one of the oldest known carvings of its size and is also one of the first attempts to represent perspective in a work of art. Happily, the stele, originally from Uruk, remained untouched during the looting of the Iraq Museum.



Matthew Bogdanos



Matthew Bogdanos

When the U.S. military's task force arrived at the museum in April 2003, its members discovered that the museum had been used as a heavily fortified fighting position. The team found significant caches of ammunition and weaponry, as well as more than a dozen military uniforms scattered throughout the compound; shown is a rocket-propelled grenade launcher that had been fired. In all, about 100 to 150 Iraqi soldiers used the Iraq Museum as a base from which to attack American forces.

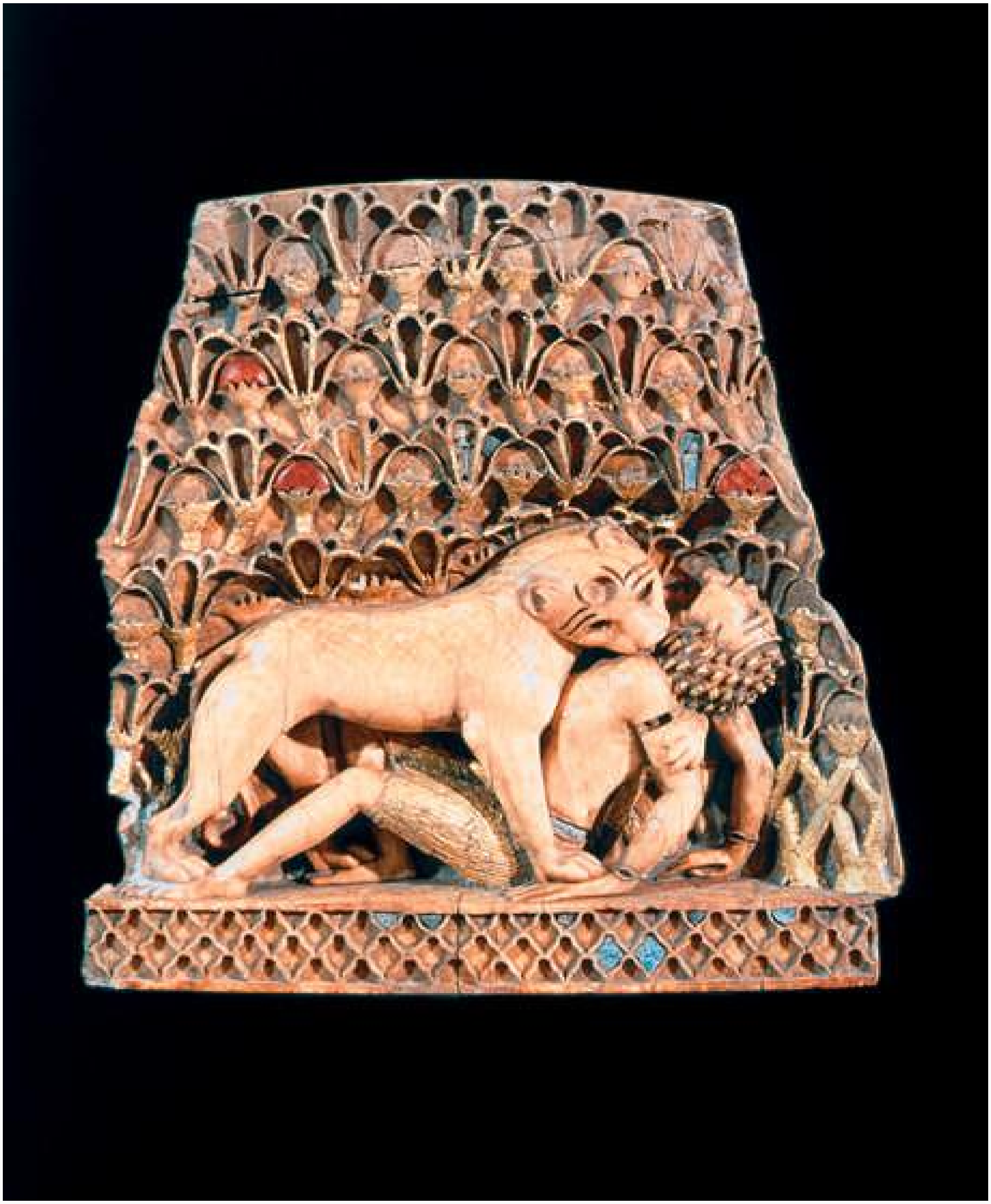
The first startling discovery we made (and we would make many) was that the museum compound had been turned into a military fighting position. We discovered a sniper position in one of the second-floor storage rooms: a window slit broken open from the inside, with boxes moved against the wall to place the opening at a shooter's height. Immediately next to this window, one of only two that offered a clear field of fire onto the street on the western side of the museum, were RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade) parts, an ammunition box, an AK-47 magazine, a grenade pouch and an inoperable grenade. Nor was this an isolated instance. We found more than 15 Iraqi army uniforms thrown about the museum grounds. We also found a box of fragmentation grenades in the front of the administrative building immediately next to one of two firing positions that had been dug in the front of the museum compound. We found two more identical firing positions—one in the rear of the museum and one on the side of the compound—and each of the four could hold four shooters. According to several witnesses, they were used by some of the 100–150 Iraqi soldiers who had fired on U.S. troops from within the compound.

There were also expended RPGs and boxes of live (not yet fired) RPGs scattered throughout the museum compound. Like the rest of the world, I'd also seen the infamous hole in the façade of the Children's Museum (the building between the galleries and the main street). When I saw that it was the result of a single round fired from the 120-mm main gun of a U.S. M1A1 Abrams tank, I began to understand the world-wide condemnation surrounding the museum. Then I saw the evidence. The tank gunner fired only after someone had fired an RPG, at him from that building. On the roof, we found a stash of RPGs and, inside, blood splatter whose pattern suggested that at least two Iraqis had been on the third floor when the round hit its mark.

Once we cleared the compound of all explosives and weapons, we turned to our first task: to identify what was missing—a daunting task given the sheer size of the museum's collection and its incomplete, non-computerized record-keeping system. To further complicate matters, the museum's storage rooms contained not only catalogued items but also pieces from various excavations throughout the country that had not yet been catalogued. Worse still, over the last several decades the museum staff and government officials had systematically removed items to several other locations, making the otherwise merely difficult task of compiling what was missing into one of Herculean difficulty.

After a quick walk-through of the museum and its grounds on our first day to assess the damage, we began a painstakingly methodical, room-by-room inspection that took months, covering the administrative offices, restoration rooms, public galleries and storage rooms. What was clear within the first few hours of our initial inspection of the museum on April 21, 2003, however, was that the originally reported number of 170,000 items stolen in 48 hours had to be wrong. It was obvious that there were simply not enough empty cases, shelves or pedestals in the entire museum for there to have been anything near 170,000 objects stolen. Moreover, had it really been done in 48 hours, it would not have been looters, but highly organized thieves.

In the beginning the response was tentative as we also struggled with the connection in people's minds between the museum and the former regime, particularly with the Ba'ath Party. Thanks in part to our patience, but mostly owing to the strong sense of history and culture of the average Iraqi, the amnesty program ultimately resulted in the return of approximately 1,935 antiquities between our arrival in April and the end of December 2003.



Scala / Art Resource, New York

A lioness attacks a Nubian in a field of lotus and papyrus plants in this ninth-century B.C. ivory plaque from Nimrud. The plaque, only 4 inches tall, is decorated with carnelian and lapis lazuli inlays and is embossed in gold leaf. It is considered one of the world's most beautiful examples of ancient art and is one of the finest pieces to have been stolen from the Iraq Museum.

As for those who returned the artifacts, there were as many different methods and reasons for coming forward as there were individuals coming forward. Sometimes people would approach us on the street and ask what would happen to their "friend" if he returned an antiquity. Others would suggest that they might know someone who might know someone who might have an artifact. Some would ask if there was a reward for any returned property. Because seasoned investigators are always willing to pay for information but not for the contraband itself, this was a thorny question that we usually deflected. Some would drop a bag near the museum; some would approach empty-handed, needing extra persuasion; some would come with the artifacts in hand. The locations varied. Sometimes they turned in the objects to the nearest mosque. Sometimes they came to the museum. Sometimes we met them at a remote street corner. Sometimes they turned in antiquities to random U.S. soldiers whom they approached while the soldiers were directing traffic at intersections or manning military checkpoints somewhere in the city.

Occasionally we even found returned items in previously inspected rooms in the museum itself—loudly "chastising" each other in front of as many staff as possible for having "missed" those items during the previous inspection, but just as loudly noting that we would not be able to re-inspect those rooms for another few days or so. Invariably more items were subsequently "found" in those rooms, and the same scene was repeated.

No matter the question we were asked, the answer was always the same: "Why don't we talk about it over a cup of tea?" Some, albeit the minority, had taken the items for safekeeping, intending to return them as soon as it was safe to do so. Far more had stolen the artifacts, but then had a change of heart when they realized they were stealing not from the regime but from themselves. Many simply grew worried they would be caught. Mothers turned in items stolen by their sons; sons turned in items stolen by their friends; employees turned in items stolen by their bosses. One of the first returns was a small Hassuna-style pot with its characteristic reddish linear design from the sixth millennium B.C. It came back in a garbage bag. The Sacred Vase of Warka was returned on June 12, 2003, in the trunk of a car, along with 95 other artifacts, after two weeks of negotiations. While money was discussed, none was ever used, and the vase came back gratis.

The amnesty program was so well publicized that, while home on leave in Manhattan in late summer 2003, I was contacted by an individual who had learned of the investigation on the news and had a "package" for me. We arranged a meeting in a crowded coffee shop in the middle of the day in midtown Manhattan. He handed me a small brown envelope without incident (and again without money), and a 4,000-year-old Akkadian piece is now back in the Iraq Museum where it belongs.

The fourth and final component to the investigation involved classic law-enforcement techniques such as investigative raids and random car-stops at checkpoints throughout Iraq, as well as increased vigilance at international borders. Raids on targeted locations resulted in the recovery inside Iraq of 2,027 artifacts between our arrival in April and the end of December 2003. Most notable among the recoveries inside Iraq were those made by the U.S. Army's 812th Military Police Company. In September 2003, it conducted a predawn raid on a farmhouse in al-Rabbia, north of Baghdad, and found the breathtaking Mask of Warka buried under about a foot and a half of dirt in the backyard. Six weeks later, acting on a tip about a smuggling ring that was operating in southeast Baghdad, the company conducted another predawn raid, this time recovering a cache of small arms

and the Nimrud brazier, the only known example of a wheeled wooden firebox. Clad in bronze, it had been used to warm the throne room of King Shalmaneser III (ruled 858–824 B.C.). Using information acquired during that seizure, the company raided a warehouse in Baghdad later that same day and recovered 76 pieces that had been stolen from the museum's basement, including 32 cylinder seals and the extraordinary Bassetki Statue—the latter submerged in a cesspool behind the warehouse and covered in grease by patient smugglers willing to wait for a more favorable time to move and sell the statue.

None of these recoveries would have been possible without the overwhelming support and trust of the Iraqi people. It was a trust we all worked hard to develop, largely by taking the time and effort to trust them first. It was a trust the Iraqis slowly but warmly returned. Relying heavily on local informants was precisely how I had conducted hundreds of criminal investigations in New York City. And, in Baghdad as in New York, each informant had his own reason for coming forward. Some simply wanted the offenders caught. Some were only interested in a reward—and were always paid for their information. Others were rival antiquities dealers wishing to put their competition out of business.

Similarities aside, there was one striking difference between conducting law-enforcement operations in New York and doing so in a combat zone. Any seasoned detective will tell you there are always two questions that must be raised before trusting any informant: What is the source of his information (how does he know what he says he knows) and what is his motivation (why is he coming forward)? In Baghdad, however, there was a third question we had to ask: Were we being led into an ambush? That we were never ambushed is as much a testament to the character of the Iraqi people as to our law-enforcement-honed instincts about whom to trust and whom to view with suspicion.

In one case in which our instincts did not work, an elderly couple came to us breathless and distraught. They told us they were caretakers of a nearby manuscript museum that contained some of the finest Islamic manuscripts in the world, many more than a thousand years old, and said armed looters had just entered their museum. If we wanted to save the collection and catch the thieves, there was no time to waste. Within five minutes, 12 team members flew out of the compound in our vehicles. Without any reconnaissance of either the target or the area surrounding it, we did it the "Marine way," improvising on the fly and developing the tactical plan over our radios as we sped to the location.

As we pulled up, we saw that the manuscript museum was a three-story building, and while we would have preferred reaching its roof from an adjoining building and then clearing the building top to bottom, none of the nearby buildings was close enough. All of them, however, offered clear fields of fire on us as we entered and left the building. We had no choice but to go in the front. Leaving one three-man team to cover the front door, we entered and began methodically clearing all three floors. It was not until we got to the roof, in 115 degree heat and wearing 20 pounds of body armor, that we realized that we had been had. There were no looters, and there had not been any that day.



Matthew Bogdanos

A footlocker, intercepted with the help of the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Ahmed Chalabi, while allegedly on its way to the Iranian border, contained 425 looted antiquities.

Back at the compound, the elderly couple told us the truth. It had been a test, and we had "passed." Looters had been there the previous day and were coming back in a day or two to steal what remained. The caretakers had come to us to learn whether we would respond and, if we did, to prove to potential thieves how fast the Americans would react. The looters never did return.

As for the thefts from the Iraq Museum, our investigation showed there had been not one but three separate thefts from the museum, by three separate groups, in the four days between April 8 and 12. Forty pieces were stolen from the public galleries and nearby restoration rooms, with the thieves appearing to have been organized and selective in their choice of artifacts, stealing the more valuable items and bypassing copies and less valuable pieces. Of these 40, 15 have been recovered, including five of the finest pieces in the museum collection: the Sacred Vase of Warka, the Mask of Warka, the Bassetki Statue, one of the two Ninhursag Bulls and a ninth-century B.C. Assyrian ivory headboard from Nimrud. These recoveries highlight the complexity of the investigation. The amnesty program netted two of the five finest pieces (the bull was returned as a walk-in, and the vase after some negotiation but no money), while seizures accounted for the other three—two inside Iraq (the Warka mask and the Bassetki Statue) and one outside Iraq by Jordanian customs (the ivory headboard). The other ten were returned under similarly diverse circumstances.

Sadly, many priceless pieces remain missing. Two of the most prominent are a headless inscribed limestone statue from Lagash (about 2450 B.C.) and the eighth-century B.C. Lioness Attacking a Nubian ivory from Nimrud.

The second theft was from the museum's aboveground storage rooms. Of three such storage rooms, two were looted, but none of their exterior steel doors showed any signs of forced entry. The evidence strongly suggests, therefore, that the first person to enter the aboveground storage rooms had the keys and personally knew the museum well (or was with someone who knew it well). Because access to the museum and especially its storage rooms was carefully controlled, the key holder had to have been either a returning staff member or someone (Iraqi army or civilian) to whom a staff member had given the necessary information. In either event, the unforced entry into the storage rooms of the museum required the kind of knowledge and access only a staff member possessed.

Approximately 3,138 excavated objects (jars, vessels, pottery shards) were stolen from these storage rooms. Objects in these rooms are arranged by site, year and field number, not by museum number, and must be hand-checked against excavation catalogues. Although the shelved pieces from older excavations had been largely counted, in the aisles were many dozens of boxes containing pieces from more recent excavations that had been received by the staff before the war but had not yet been entered into the museum's index card system. It is therefore currently impossible to provide an exact figure for the number of pieces stolen from these rooms and it is likely that the number will increase by one or two thousand when final inventories are tallied.

It was in these randomly looted storage rooms that we discovered evidence of the sniper position mentioned earlier. During the battle, U.S. forces fired a single round at the sniper that penetrated the wall and (as our later examination determined) missed him by about 18 inches. The sniper appears to have immediately abandoned his position, as shown by the trail of Iraqi army uniform parts strewn across the floor and stairwell that traced the path of his flight. The sniper's hasty escape offers a possible explanation for why the storage rooms bore no signs of forced entry: in his haste he left the door open. But this does not explain how he (or they—snipers generally operate in two-man teams: the sniper and his spotter) got into the storage room in the first place.

As of the end of December 2003, about 3,037 pieces stolen from these storage rooms had been recovered—about 1,924 via the amnesty program and 1,113 from seizures. I am aware, from contacts within the museum and with law-enforcement officials throughout the world, of more recoveries (both through amnesty and seizures) after December 2003, but with not enough specificity to provide details or numbers here.

The evidence strongly suggests that the third theft, that of a basement-level storage room, was an inside job. Here, the thieves attempted to steal the most easily transportable items, stored in the most remote corner of the most remote room in the basement of the museum. The locked front door of the L-shaped suite of four storage rooms was intact, and its rear door could be accessed only through a remote, narrow and hidden stairwell. As a further protection from theft, the staff had bricked up the back entrance, completely sealing those four rooms. It was to no avail. As we crept down that dark hidden stairwell, we saw that the metal rear door was wide open and—as we had come to expect by then—that it showed no signs of forced entry. Worse still, the bricked rear doorway had been broken and entered.



Matthew Bogdanos

The treasure of Nimrud—more than 1,000 pieces of jewelry, precious stones and ornamentation weighing more than 100 pounds and dating to the height of the Assyrian empire in around 800 B.C.—was recovered from the vault of Iraq's Central Bank in one waterlogged metal box.

We climbed through the narrow breach in the top of the wall and discovered that a theft had occurred. Three of the four rooms in this storage area were untouched, and we all began to breathe a sigh of relief—until we reached a single corner in the fourth room, where the chaos was shocking: 103 fishing-tackle-sized plastic boxes, originally containing thousands of cylinder seals, beads, amulets and jewelry, were randomly thrown in all directions. What remained of their contents was scattered everywhere. Amid the devastation, hundreds of larger, but empty, boxes nearby had been untouched. It was immediately clear that these thieves knew what they were looking for and where to look.

The thieves had the keys (previously well hidden elsewhere in the museum) to 30 nondescript storage cabinets lining that particular corner of the room. Those cabinets contained a portion of the world's finest collection of cylinder seals and tens of thousands of unparalleled Greek, Roman, Hellenistic, Arabic and Islamic gold and silver coins. It is simply inconceivable that this area had been breached by anyone who did not have an intimate insider's knowledge of the museum and this particular hidden corner of the basement.

After a methodical, hours-long search in a fully lit basement, we eventually found the keys under the scattered debris. Once most of the forensic examination was completed, we finally inspected the cabinets; Dr. Nawala al-Mutwali, the museum's director, and I apprehensively opened each one together. To our extreme joy, we discovered that none had been entered.

Piecing together what happened, we concluded that the thieves had lost the keys to the cabinets after dropping them in one of the plastic boxes on the floor. Because there was no electricity in the museum at the time of the looting, they had decided to burn the foam padding for light. After unsuccessfully searching for the keys, throwing boxes and their contents in every direction, all the while breathing the noxious fumes of the burning padding in the unventilated basement, the thieves eventually left without opening any of the cabinets. A catastrophic loss of the priceless collection inside the cabinets had been averted. The contents of the plastic boxes on the floor and some of the items on the nearby shelves, however, were stolen, including 5,144 cylinder seals and 5,542 pins, glass bottles, beads, amulets and other pieces of jewelry.

Approximately 2,307 of the 10,686 antiquities that had been stolen from the basement have been recovered: one through the amnesty program (at the coffee shop in New York), 911 from inside Iraq, and 1,395 from seizures outside Iraq. This highlights the critical importance of both seizures and international cooperation in recovering Iraq's stolen antiquities, particularly the smaller, more transportable objects. Of the 911 items stolen from the basement that were recovered inside Iraq, 820 were recovered by the Iraqi Italian Institute of Archaeological Sciences in November 2003. The product of months of investigative work by Italian authorities, most of the cache had been clandestinely purchased—good results but a bad precedent and certainly not one any of us wished to publicize. Paying for information works; paying for contraband, however, promotes new theft as much as it recovers old thefts. The remaining 1,395 recoveries of items stolen from the basement all occurred outside Iraq through border searches and international investigations.

Altogether, then, the evidence indicates that 13,864 pieces were originally stolen from the museum, but the evidence also indicates that the final number of missing items is likely to top 15,000 when inventories are finally completed. The most reasonable accounting of what has been recovered worldwide of the items stolen

from the museum is 15 pieces from the public galleries, approximately 3,037 pieces from the aboveground storage rooms and approximately 2,307 pieces from the basement, for a total of approximately 5,359 pieces that the museum staff or I have personally verified.

As the investigation moves forward, it faces several obstacles in the attempt to recover the antiquities and stop their trafficking. First, smugglers draw few distinctions: whether the cargo is drugs, weapons or antiquities, smugglers are paid for their ability to evade the law. Indeed, during the first leg of the journey out of Iraq, antiquities and weapons often travel together. Those wealthy Madison Avenue and Bond Street dealers and collectors who believe they are engaged in benign criminal activity are actually often financing weapons smuggling. In the last year, some of that money has also funded the insurgency in Iraq.

Second, many in the mainstream art community are complicit in antiquities smuggling. Because neither private collectors nor acquisitive museum curators are usually able or willing to contact art thieves directly, the middleman art dealer is crucial, often making the sale before the theft. Moreover, before any collector or museum pays for a stolen antiquity, the object must first be authenticated as genuine, at a price, by an expert curator, dealer or scholar. The price is not always money. We have been told that sometimes the "price" is access to an item that no one else has seen or critically examined before and that sometimes scholars are attracted to this sordid business by the opportunity to publish a rare or unusual item. The allure, apparently, is overwhelming for some. After an artifact is authenticated, however, and before it can be displayed or resold, it must acquire provenance, either through publication by a respected authority or through forged documentation.

Finally, many countries have less interest in stopping the illegal trade in antiquities than might be indicated by their public protestations, particularly because "open" borders are profitable borders. Some countries generate sizeable customs and excise fees from shipping and are not eager to impose any increase in inspection rates that might reduce such revenue. Moreover, the sheer volume of tonnage that passes through certain international ports and free-trade zones makes anything approaching complete inspection impossible. Even the improved technology placed at such ports and borders as a result of the September 11 attacks does not solve the problem: Devices that detect weapons and explosives do not detect alabaster, lapis lazuli or carnelian.

Recovering the remaining missing pieces, then, will likely take years of hard work and a little luck. Mostly, though, it requires a comprehensive global strategy including improved border inspections, heightened public awareness and robust international cooperation that promotes coordinated simultaneous investigations around the globe of smugglers, sellers and buyers, with prosecution and incarceration as very real options.

Justice is also about process, and our other goal, in addition to recovering the stolen artifacts, was to cut through the unproductive rhetoric and uncover the truth about what happened at the Iraq Museum. I hope we have accomplished this. The missing artifacts belong to the Iraqi people, but in a very real sense they also represent the shared history of all mankind. So much remains to be done, but after two years I am humbled to have worked with so many talented and dedicated professionals. To the extent that we have taken even the smallest first step in the recovery of these treasures, I am extraordinarily honored to have served in so worthy an undertaking.

For a complete account of the investigation and the illicit antiquities trade, see the author's just-released book, Thieves of Baghdad: One Marine's Passion for Ancient Civilizations and the Journey to Recover the World's Greatest Stolen Treasures *(Bloomsbury, 2005). For a more scholarly treatment, see his article, "The Casualties of War: The Truth about the Iraq Museum,"* in American Journal of Archaeology 109 (2005), pp. 477–526.

Continuing the Fight

Matthew Bogdanos could not have known what an eventful four years he would have. Normally a prosecutor in New York, Bogdanos was recalled to active duty by presidential order just hours after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (he went back to civilian life 2005). As he outlines in the accompanying article, he headed the American military's counterterrorism team, first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq, and took the lead in the efforts to recover Iraq's looted antiquities.

Though his involvement with the recovery of antiquities officially ended in November 2003 as part of a normal rotation of duties, Bogdanos has continued to be involved in the recovery of looted objects—on his own time and, occasionally, on his own dime (he has paid for his own travel, for example). He has traveled to six countries and has met with eight international organizations to try to get someone to assume responsibility for coordinating international anti-looting efforts (he has not succeeded). "We can't do this nationally," he told **BAR**. "Scotland Yard, Jordanian Customs, the Italian *carabinieri* all do a great job, but only within their countries."

We asked Bogdanos why he, a counterterrorism specialist, became involved in combating antiquities looting. In addition to his life-long love of classical civilizations, there is a more practical reason. The two are part of the same effort, he explained: The sale of looted antiquities is funding the current insurgency in Iraq. "We never recovered antiquities without also recovering weapons," Bogdanos told us. "Drugs are funding the insurgency in Afghanistan; in Iraq it's antiquities."**—Steve Feldman**

Notes

The Genesis of Genesis

a. According to the documentary hypothesis, the Pentateuch consists of at least four discrete textual strands that have been woven together to make one continuous narrative: J or the Yahwist (in German Jahwist), after the personal name of the God of Israel (YHWH, or Yahweh) used primarily in this strand; E, or the Elohist, who uses a more generalized term (Elohim) for God; P, the Priestly Code, which makes up most of Leviticus and much of Exodus and Numbers; and D, which stands for the Deuteronomist and consists of much of the Book of Deuteronomy. The first Creation account (Genesis 1:1–2:4a; see box) is credited to P; the second (Genesis 2:4b–24) to J.

b. The names of the "proto-divine" figures are not written with the divine determinative, in sharp contrast to all the other gods mentioned in the composition, indicating that although they give birth to gods, they are not divine in their own right.

c. See Bill T. Arnold and David B. Weisberg, "Babel und Bibel und Bias," **BR**, February 2002.

d. See Steven W. Holloway, "Mad to See the Monuments," **BR**, December 2001.

1. George Smith, The Chaldean Account of Genesis Containing the Description of the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, the Times of the Patriarchs, and Nimrod; Babylonian Fables, and Legends of the Gods; From the Cuneiform Inscriptions (1876; photographic reproduction, Minneapolis: Wizards Book Shelf, 1977).

2. Nahum Sarna, Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1966).

3. Alexander Heidel, The Babylonian Genesis (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1951).

4. Scholars have disagreed over the date of the composition. Some, like Thorkild Jacobsen, put it in the Old Babylonian period (early second millennium B.C.E.), when the city of Babylon first gained prominence in Mesopotamia, and others, like Wilfred Lambert, date it to the time of Nebuchadrezzar I (end of the second millennium), when Babylon was again in ascendancy and the statue of Marduk was returned from its captivity in Elam.

5. Making crucial decisions at parties while under the influence of strong drink is reminiscent of how decisions are made in the court of King Ahaseurus according to the Book of Esther.

6. Anne Drafkorn-Kilmer in a paper delivered at the 50th Rencontre assyriologique internationale conference, held at the Skukuza Wildlife Preserve, in South Africa, in August 2004 and has compared this chariot and its movement with God's chariot in the Book of Ezekiel.

7. I associate the term sābitarkāti, "pinching the rear" with the Akkadian term ṣibit appi, "a pinch of the nose," which means "sneeze" and Rabbinic Hebrew "sneeze from below" designating flatus.

8. An innocent reader of this passage will certainly break out laughing from the comic scene. But there is an additional dimension to this description, which be it primary or secondary is intentional. This dimension is revealed in an ancient Assyrian cultic commentary that reads: "The king who opens the barrel in the race is Marduk who captured Tiamat with his penis" (ša ina ušarīšu Tiamat ikmû). It is reasonable to assume that Marduk's sexual organ is none other than the arrow mentioned in Enūma Eliš as his weapon. The commentator has sensed the obscene nature of the original text and has been drawn to it, and we too should give it proper heed. As is well known, sexual and anal humor goes hand in hand, and this applies to Mesopotamian humor as well. It seems, therefore, that the sexual humor of the commentary has been piqued by the anal humor in the text, the specific stimulus being the reference to the evil wind going behind Marduk.

9. See Victor A. Hurowitz, "Babylon in Bethel: A New Look at Jacob's Dream," in Teshurot LaAvishur: Studies in the Bible and Ancient Near East, in Hebrew and Semitic Languages; Festschrift Presented to Prof. Yitzhak Avishur on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday, ed. Michael Heltzer and Meir Malul (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publications, 2004), pp. 103-109 [Hebrew]; English version soon to appear in Orientalism, Assyriology, and the Bible, ed. Steven W. Holloway (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, in preparation).

10. Tablet vii, lines 159-162.

11. Friedrich Delitzsch, Babel and Bible: A Lecture on the Significance of Assyriological Research for Religion Delivered Before the German Emperor, trans. Thomas J. McCormack (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1902); and Babel and Bible: Two Lectures Delivered before Members of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft in the Presence of the Great Emperor, ed. C.H.W. Johns (Oxford, UK: Williams and Norgate; New York: G.P. Putnams's Sons, 1903).

12. In truth, Leonard King's Seven Tablets of Creation, or the Babylonian and Assyrian Legends Concerning the Creation of the World and of Mankind (vols. 1 and 2 [London: Luzac and Co., 1902]; see www.cwru.edu/univlib/preserve/Etana/KING.SEVENv1/KING.SEVENv1.html),

published the same year as Delitzsch's lecture, presented in even more detail what was known at the time, and integrated it into an all inclusive picture of the Bible's dependence on Babylonian culture.

13. According to Heidel, even the etymological connection between Tiamat and Tehôm cannot be taken to indicate dependence of Genesis on Enūma Eliš, because the words are semantically different (one means "sea" while the other means "subterranean waters"). Had the biblical author borrowed from the Babylonian work, he likely would have used a different word. Heidel's (and also Lambert's) objections notwithstanding, an echo of Tiamat in the Hebrew Tehôm is, in my opinion, not to be ruled out. Isaiah 51:9–10, mentions the arm of YHWH which has (in the distant past) smitten Rahab, pierced Tannîn and (during the Exodus) dried up the sea (Yam) and the waters of Tehôm rabbāh (the great Deep), mixing cosmic past, historical past, and impending redemption. One can maintain that the sea, yam, and the great Deep, Tehôm rabbāh, in this verse are only natural phenomena, yet reference to the mythological monsters in the immediately preceding verse certainly imbue these "natural" terms with their original mythological connotations. If so, there seems to be a biblical "memory" of mythological Tiamat piqued by authors in various manners, and one should not rule out that the Priestly author also remembered it.

14. CAT 1.3 III 38-4. Mark S. Smith, Ugaritic Narrative Poetry, ed. Simon Parker, Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World Series 9 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), p. 111.

15. KTU 1.5 I 1. See Smith, "The Baal Cycle," in Ugaritic Narrative Poetry, p. 141.

16. Lambert, "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," Journal of Theological Studies 16 (1965), pp. 287–300; republished with two postscripts in "I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood": Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11, eds. R.S. Hess and D.T. Tsumura, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 4 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), pp. 96-113. Moshe Weinfeld's transliteration and Hebrew translation of Enūma Eliš, published by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1973, refers in its notes to numerous additional parallels between individual lines and specific biblical verses.

17. Lambert, "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," Journal of Theological Studies 16 (1965), pp. 287–300; republished with two postscripts in "I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood": Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11, eds. R.S. Hess and D.T. Tsumura, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 4 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), pp. 96-113. Moshe Weinfeld's transliteration and Hebrew translation of Enūma Eliš, published by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1973, refers in its notes to numerous additional parallels between individual lines and specific biblical verses.

18. For a synthetic reading of the composition see Thorkild Jacobsen, The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 165-192; H.L.J. Vanstiphout, "Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed: An Essay," Orientalia Lovaninesia Periodica 23 (1992), pp. 37-61. For an attempt at higher literary criticism, see A. Leo Oppenheim, "Mesopotamian Mythology I," Orientalia n.s. 16 (1974), pp. 207–238.

19. Jacobsen, Treasures of Darkness, p. 166; Guo Honggeng, "The Mysterious Four-faced Statue (OIM A719)," Journal of Ancient Civilizations 16 (2001), pp. 87-92.

20. Stephanie Dalley, Myths from Mesopotamia (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 203–227; B. Foster, Before the Muses 1 (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1996), pp. 461–485; A. Annus, The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu, State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts III (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001).

21. Lambert, "Ninurta Mythology in the Babylonian Epic of Creation," in Keilschriftliche Literaturen, Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. RAI, Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 6 (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1986), pp. 55-60.

22. Ze'ev Yeivin, "A Silver Cup from Tomb 204a at 'Ain-Samiya," Israel Exploration Journal 21 (1971), pp. 78-81; Yigael Yadin, "A Note on the Scenes Depicted on the 'Ain-Samiya Cup," Israel Exploration Journal 21 (1971), pp. 82-85.

23. K. Oberhuber, "Eine Hymne an Nippur (UET VI 118)," Archív Orientální 35 (1967), pp. 262-270.

24. A. Livingstone, Court and Literary Miscellanea, State Archives of Assyria 3 (Helsinki: Helsinki Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 99-102 no. 39.

25. A. Livingstone, Court and Literary Miscellanea, pp. 95-98 no. 38.

26. Lambert believes that the Assyrian version did not consist of an entire new edition, and that the switch of names reflects only incomplete reworking. See Lambert, "The Assyrian Recession of Enūma Eliš," in Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten, eds. H. Waetzold and H. Hauptmann, Heidelberger Studien zum alten Orient 6 (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1997), pp. 77-80.

27. For a variant on the idea of divine rest, see Peter Machinist, "Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983), pp. 221-226.

28. “Contrastive” study of ancient Near Eastern sources combined with “comparative” study to form a “contextual approach” has been advocated by William Hallo, editor of *Scripture in Context*. See for instance Hallo, “The Context of Scripture: Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Their Relevance for Biblical Exegesis,” *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 11, A (1994), pp. 9-15.

Backward Glance: Americans at Nippur

1. John Peters and John Haynes, quoted in Bruce Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon: The Ancient Near East and American Intellectual Life, 1880–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996), p. 46, 47.
2. Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, p. 48.
3. Paul G. Bahn, *The Illustrated History of Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), p. 155.
4. Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, p. 54.
5. Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, p. 57.

Europe Confronts Assyrian Art

a. Layard first identified Nimrud as the site of ancient Nineveh; in fact, it is the site of the Assyrian city of Kalhu, called Calah in the Bible (Genesis 10:11–12). He apparently identified Nimrud with the Biblical character Nimrod, who, after founding Babel, “went into Assyria, and built Nineveh” (Genesis 10:11). Layard later moved north to excavate at Mosul, the actual site of Nineveh.
b. These letters, now in the British Library in London, provide a fascinating glimpse of the very first reactions to the Assyrian discoveries.
c. See Jacob Rothenberg, “Lord Elgin’s Marbles: How Sculptures from the Parthenon Got to the British Museum,” **AO** 01:02. Another prominent 18th-century German scholar, Johann Gottfried Herder, objected to the notion that Greek art, or any body of art, could provide a universal standard to which all traditions should aspire. He argued that Egyptian art, for instance, was an independent body of art produced for its own reasons; it therefore had to be understood on its own terms, not by comparison with Greek art.
d. Ezekiel lived in the early sixth century B.C., during the Babylonian Exile. Here he is referring back to the earlier period of the Divided Monarchy, when the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel (late eighth century B.C.) as well as Babylon.

1. Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1849), pp. 66–67.
2. Layard, *Nineveh*, pp. 81–85.
3. British Library 38977, 25–27, dated August 5, 1846.
4. Frederick Nathaniel Bohrer, “Assyria as Art: A Perspective on the Early Reception of Ancient Near Eastern Artefacts,” in *Culture and History 4* (1989), p. 20.
5. Athenaeum (1850), p. 1121.
6. British Library 38977, 219–224, dated March 31, 1847.
7. Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, *Notes on the Early History of Babylonia* (London: John W. Parker & Son, 1854).
8. John Philip Newman, The *Thrones and Palaces of Babylon and Nineveh* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1876), p. 360.
9. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1974).
10. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London: John Murray, 1853), pp. 201–202.

Firsthand Report: Tracking Down the Looted Treasures of Iraq

1. This was the U.S. government’s first fully operational multi-agency task force ever deployed by a combatant commander to a war zone. Previously tested in Afghanistan in the winter of 2001, the team was led by the military but contained superbly trained investigators and trigger-pullers from a dozen different federal law-enforcement agencies, including the CIA, U.S. Customs, FBI, Diplomatic Security Service, the Departments of Energy and the Treasury, Drug Enforcement Administration and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. I was honored to have been chosen to command this task force.

